

**OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR OF
THE OIC INDEPENDENT PERMANENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**TASHKENT DECLARATION ON IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING AND PROTECTING
THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH FOR BUILDING PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in partnership with the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), held its 6th Annual Seminar on the subject of *‘Importance of promoting and protecting the rights of youth for building peaceful democratic societies and sustainable development’* in Tashkent on 7-8 October 2019. Besides Commission Members, the Seminar was attended by relevant experts from academia and organizations such as the OHCHR, African Union, OIC Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF), Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth and Central Council of Union of Youth in Uzbekistan. A large number of representatives from all OIC Member and Observer States including their National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) also participated in the Seminar.

In addition to comprehensive presentations made by the experts/panellists, participants of the Seminar analysed the scope of existing international and regional human rights instruments and mechanisms to protect and promote youth rights; highlighted key challenges faced by the youth in the Member States for the full realization of their rights and proposed ways and means to strengthen the role of youth in building peaceful, democratic, resilient and sustainable societies. Based on the comprehensive deliberations and concrete recommendations during the Seminar, IPHRC concluded the following as outcome of the Seminar:

Affirmed that Islam ordains the elders to serve as role models for younger generation and investing in the character building of youth to uphold the value system on which Islamic societies are founded. Islam terms youth as the most important period of one’s life as a young Muslim becomes accountable before Allah Almighty for all his/her thoughts and actions. It is also an age in which all sorts of ideas, including distorted ideologies, could be easily indoctrinated in their minds. Hence, Islamic principles ensure that young people have full access to all their rights without any barriers while also being accountable to fulfil their obligations.

Recognized that ‘Youth’ is a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence and awareness of interdependence as members of a community¹. In practical terms, ‘youth’, instead of a strictly defined age-group, is considered as a cultural concept based on political, economic and socio-cultural contexts and perceptions of different communities and the transition from dependence to independence occurs at different stages in relation to different rights. It is because of the fluidity of the concept that UN, when it comes to implementation of youth policies and strategies at the national level, conforms to the age-group and definition of ‘youth’ in a more flexible manner as used by any Member State.

¹<https://unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=TVETipedia+Glossary+A-Z&filt=all&id=9>

Identified that youth rights refer to the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms by young people. These rights have generally fallen into three categories: (a) **Provision**: Protect young people's access to amenities and services like food, clothes, shelter, education, etc.; (b) **Protection**: safety from abuses, including physical, mental, and psychological abuse; and (c) **Participation**: opportunity to engage and participate as partners in decision making that affect them throughout their life cycle.

Highlighted that youth rights are the rights that everyone should enjoy but are denied to some because of their young age. It impacts young people, sometimes overtly, through legal age restrictions, but, more importantly and invisibly, through negative attitudes, beliefs, biases and stereotypes about youth, thus denying them opportunities to enjoy their due rights. Given these barriers, there is a need for specific protection to tackle discrimination against young people, especially young women.

Highlighted that while the existing human rights framework applies to young people, there is no specific framework/ instrument setting out their particular rights at a global level, which leaves a gap.

Acknowledged the contribution of the international and regional efforts in protection and promotion of youth rights, which inter alia include the OIC-2025 Plan of Action which emphasized the need for youth capacity building and youth exchange programs; Sessions of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Youth and Sports which adopted the OIC Youth Strategy; the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) Triennial Action Plan (2016-2018); World Programme of Action for Youth; UN Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth, peace and security recognizing the role of youth in peace building; General Assembly resolution entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"; Human Rights Council resolution 35/14 (2017) on youth and human rights which call for mainstreaming of youth rights; the African Youth Charter; and Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programs;

Identified that the OIC region benefits from one of the highest youth concentrations in the world². Youth represents a remarkable demographic potential for the OIC Member States, offering it unprecedented advantages in industry, innovation and growth. Yet a significant part of young population continues to encounter significant legal, cultural, social and economic barriers affecting their empowerment and equal opportunities to reach their full potential. Young girls and women are often at a greater disadvantage due to their unequal access to resources, goods and services.

Further identified that the '*demographic youth bulge*' in OIC region is happening at a time when technological revolution in the shape of Artificial Intelligence is transforming the way we operate and interact. These two forces, *demography and technology*, are influencing young people's aspirations. They expect free flow of information, responsive governance and accountable political systems and equality of opportunities in all aspects of life. They are talking about these matters in terms of 'rights' not as issues. Empowered by technology, young people are articulating their frustration to a global audience, which has profound implications at all levels. While promoting their right to positively influence the world opinion, they need to be cautioned about the pitfalls of the social media in fomenting fake news, terrorism, radicalization, stereotypes and xenophobia that lead to hatred, discrimination and extremism.

Identified numerous challenges faced by the young population in OIC countries due to socio-economic marginalization, lack of or inadequate education, stereotyping and disenfranchisement

² OIC Outlook | Key Challenges of Youth: A Report by SESRIC 2015

resulting in radicalization and extremism. Additionally, the prevalence of conflicts, poverty and political injustices have seriously affected the potential of youth to meaningfully contribute or even participate in the promotion of sustainable development of their respective societies.

Highlighted that Muslim youth suffer disproportionately in terms of loss of opportunities due to long standing unresolved conflicts in different parts of the world which require concerted efforts for conflict resolution and peace building;

Condemned in particular the human rights abuses endured by the Muslim youth in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK) and Myanmar who are being killed, tortured, physically disabled and raped with impunity and denied the rights to life, education, freedom of expression and movement as well as right to self-determination by the occupying powers;

Recognized the importance of safeguarding the family values and institution of marriage for comprehensive moral and social upbringing of the youth, which inter alia shield them from moral vices and extremist ideologies as well as promote development of peaceful societies based on mutual affection and understanding;

Recognized that youth are the rights holders of today and future of every society. Hence the need to engage them as partners, to devise policies to protect their rights as well as to build and harness their potentials, skills and energy for strengthening democratic institutions and building inclusive societies without discrimination.

Welcomed the proposal by the Republic of Uzbekistan for the adoption of an International Convention on the Rights of Youth to meet the needs of the youth;

Recommended at international level to:

- i. intensify cooperation among key protagonists, especially the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and the United Nations Development Programme, for enhanced policy coherence, sharing of best practices, broadening stakeholder pool, and developing interlinkages for cooperation on mutual policy priorities;
- ii. work together to address the specific challenges young people face by articulating and promoting their rights through an international legal convention on youth rights. To this end, the African Youth Charter, a regional instrument, could serve as a positive normative framework for securing youth rights within the international law;
- iii. use the existing human rights instruments and mechanisms to mainstream youth rights such as addressing them through the Universal Periodic Review by involving youth organizations and NHRIs in national consultations;
- iv. consider establishing a Special Procedure on the human rights of young people and develop guidelines for States in implementing a rights-based approach to youth policies;
- v. compile data on the Youth Development Index and use it as a yardstick to measure future progress;
- vi. strengthen and align the World Programme of Action for Youth with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to promote environmental policies and initiatives aimed at building the capacity of youth as driving force in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, climate change and inequalities for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries; and
- vii. recognize that the majority of migrants, refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and those affected by armed conflicts are young men and women, hence the need to promote and protect

the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all regardless of their age and status by involving them in relevant decision making;

Called upon the Member States to:

- i. promote democratic culture, integrate the role of young people in public affairs, provide them access to justice and empower them through meaningful youth representation, participation and engagement at decision-making platforms at the local, national and international levels. To this end, legislative measures to lower the age of candidacy for public offices as well as voting age are recommended;
- ii. create conducive environment for the youth to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to information and freedom of association and assembly;
- iii. develop Plan of Action to create synergies between the OIC Youth Strategy, SDGs and UN Youth Strategy;
- iv. craft reporting mechanisms to monitor implementation of the OIC Youth Strategy, which should include timeframes, budgetary allocations, key performance indicators as well as specific roles of OIC Member States, the General Secretariat and relevant OIC Institutions;
- v. enact evidence based youth centered legislations, policies and programs for youth development and holistic cross-sectoral cooperation ensuring a human rights-based approach for transition from education to labor market by : (a) providing skill oriented education and training; (b) undertaking labor market reforms for job creation and transparency for equal access to both male and female, promoting intergenerational social mobility for better standards of living; (c) initiating specific incentives for employers to encourage youth entering the job market by setting quotas in private and public sectors;(d) encourage female participation in the labour force eliminating gender pay gaps and providing child care support for young mothers; and (e) establishing social security protection mechanisms;
- vi. ensure all necessary measures, including reviewing and, where appropriate, revising, amending or abolishing laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that discriminate against young people, in particular girls and young women;
- vii. put emphasis on quality education with focus on integration into the knowledge economy to attain higher productivity and better competitiveness levels;
- viii. install effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which could be in the form of disaggregated data and human rights indicators in the State reports to Treaty bodies;
- ix. address legal, administrative, social, economic, digital and cultural barriers that limit young people's participation and promote, supporting the establishment of independent youth-led councils, movements and networks for promoting cross-border youth exchange programmes for intercultural and interfaith dialogue and harmony;
- x. foster social integration of vulnerable or marginalized youth, such as those with disabilities, belonging to minorities, migrants, refugees, IDPs or any other vulnerable group on an equal basis with others;
- xi. ensure young people's access to reliable, safe and youth-friendly information communications technologies addressing the digital divide and promote cooperation towards developing innovative and sustainable solutions in the fields of science, technology and public policy;
- xii. encourage entrepreneurship through improved access to finance and capacity building programs for youth entrepreneurs;
- xiii. develop policies and programmes to reinforce evidence-based, scientifically accurate, age appropriate, comprehensive health and mental wellbeing awareness and reproductive health education, consistent with their evolving capacities and religious/cultural sensitivities, to help

- them make informed decisions in full partnership with parents, legal guardians and health-care providers;
- xiv. strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices to research, collect and analyze data disaggregated by sex and age to fill critical data gaps and ensure informed effective policy formulation;
 - xv. devise policies to reverse brain drain by attracting young people through increased employability and improved economic integration through availability of funding and knowledge for successful entrepreneurship;
 - xvi. focus on the character building of the youth and provide human rights education raising awareness about their rights and responsibilities thus ensuring respect for diversity to counter extremism and deviant ideologies as well as to train them for their future roles at different levels;
 - xvii. enhance intra-OIC cooperation with a view to sharing best practices as well as developing and delivering joint capacity building programs. Relevant OIC institutions such as ICYF and SESRIC could play catalytic role in organizing such capacity building programs designed for public officials, national experts, civil society organizations and media working in the domain of youth;
 - xviii. consider establishing the OIC Youth Waqf with the assistance of Islamic Development Bank to address the financial requirements for the implementation of the OIC youth strategy;
 - xix. support the initiative of the Republic of Uzbekistan for adoption of a new Convention on the Rights of Youth by the UN General Assembly;

Called upon the OIC General Secretariat to encourage participation of Muslim youth in relevant OIC meetings and also consider granting Scholarships in different disciplines of learning to the Muslim youth affected by the conflicts;

Appreciated the notable leadership and commendable role played by the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of human rights and emphasized the need to develop collaborative linkages among all OIC Member States and IPHRC for promoting better understanding of youth rights in accordance with Islamic teachings and international human rights law.

To this end, also recognized the role and contribution of the OIC General Secretariat, IPHRC, OHCHR, ICYF and SESRIC in promoting youth rights and requested them to develop targeted capacity building programs for policy makers, corporate sector and civil society to raise awareness and mainstream youth rights at all levels.

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