



# ULAANBAATAR DECLARATION OF ASIAN YOUTH PRIORITIES

## Preamble

We, the national youth councils, representatives of Government, young people, youth-led organizations, non-governmental organisations and members of the Asian Youth Council, came together in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015, to explore, discuss and define the priorities and role of Asia's youth in the post-2015 development agenda.

## Reaffirmation of Existing Global Youth Commitments

Participants of the 'One Asia' XIII Asian Youth Council General Assembly reaffirm the global community's commitments to youth set forth in the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration<sup>1</sup>, the Colombo Declaration on Youth<sup>2</sup>, and the Baku Commitment to Youth Policies<sup>3</sup>. The participants of the XIII Asian Youth Council General Assembly have expanded upon these pledges and developed the following commitments and recommendations specific to the issues affecting youth in the Asian region.

## GENDER

**Commitment 1:** Commit to the establishment and strengthening of gender-sensitive national, subnational and sectoral policies and programs, with specific consideration given to the challenges and issues affecting youth.

**Commitment 2:** Commit to implementing, improving and funding of nationwide youth friendly prevention, protection and support services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV) through the enactment of GBV laws and regulations, aligned with international standards, and the establishment or improvement of youth friendly legal and support services for victims, such as safe shelters, health, social and psychological services, including prevention and rehabilitation services for perpetrators.

**Commitment 3:** Commit to implementing and strengthening policies and programmes that increases youth participation in decision-making roles, with particular consideration given to improving access for young women through the establishment of leadership programs, gender sensitive human resource policy implementation and public awareness raising.

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<sup>1</sup> Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration 2012

<sup>2</sup> Colombo Declaration On Youth 2014

<sup>3</sup> Baku Commitment to Youth Policies 2014

**Recommendations for Action:**

- a) Undertake community research on the behaviours, attitudes and perceptions of young people relating to gender-based violence; to support advocacy, awareness raising, community mobilization and educational programmes, as well as legal and policy reforms;
- b) Utilise various educational curricula, including non-formal, such as the UN Women’s ‘Voices against Violence’, for engaging youth and providing them the tools and skills to understand and eradicate the causes of violence in their communities, educate and engage their peers and the community, and learn about support services for victims of violence;
- c) Establish and support leadership and learning networks for young women across areas of education, employment, health, civil, economic and political life, and other effective, evidence-based and results-oriented interventions to promote women’s leadership;

**HEALTH**

**Commitment 4:** Commit to implementing nation-wide provisions and access to adolescent and youth friendly health services that are sustainable, adequately-funded and staffed, and with standards promoting a holistic, preventative approach to youth health, with specific consideration provided to *marginalized, high-risk and vulnerable groups*<sup>4</sup>.

**Commitment 5:** Commit to establishing and strengthening multi-sectoral partnerships between governments, health service providers, private sector and youth-serving and youth-led organisations to ensure partners have the capacity to best respond to and prioritize youth health needs, for mental, physical and psychosocial wellbeing.

**Commitment 6:** Commit to developing and delivering behaviour change communication on youth-specific health issues and behavioural risks, including but not limited to, engagement through formal and informal educational institutions, health promotion campaigns, health volunteer networks and social media, at the national and sub-national level.

**Call to action:** As young women and men, we call on our fellow youth to take responsibility to practice healthy lifestyles, choices and behaviours; to act as change agents and leaders for youth health.

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<sup>4</sup> *Marginalized, high-risk and vulnerable groups* including, but not limited to LGBTQI, refugees, rural populations, unemployed, out-of-school, sex workers, indigenous, migrants, young people in conflict and emergency situations, young women and adolescent girls, persons with disabilities, substance users, young people living with HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis virus, and young people who have been victims of violence, including gender-based violence.

**Recommendations for Action:**

- a) Undertake research on youth health related issues, including sexual and reproductive health, so as to advocate and promote accurate information and evidence-based solutions and approaches on youth health issues;
- b) Provide youth-specific education to health service providers so as to increase their capacity to effectively meet youth-friendly health service standards and respond effectively to youth physical and psychosocial health needs;
- c) Create youth-friendly, engaging online platforms and information services on youth health information, education and services.

## **EDUCATION**

**Commitment 7:** Commit to developing and providing equal and equitable access to education at all levels for youth, with specific consideration given to vulnerable and marginalised groups, through the development of stable, long-term policies and programmes which deliver quality, inclusive and supportive learning environment and opportunities, free from discrimination, abuse and violence.

**Commitment 8:** Commit to incorporating ethics and life skills education into standard education curriculums and establishing monitoring systems and protection mechanisms that ensure participation, transparency, accountability, and fairness within educational institutes.

**Commitment 9:** Commit to developing, strengthening and regulating public-private partnerships with educational institutes to institutionalise local and international work experience opportunities, internships and career counselling for youth, thereby ensuring youth are better equipped to meet labour market demands and gain practical, relevant industry skills.

**Recommendations for Action:**

- a) Promote educational regulation and standardisation to ensure quality education for youth by enforcing internationally recognised curricula standards;
- b) Develop, promote and expand existing international study exchange and scholarship programs, in addition to information and skills sharing networks through youth-friendly communication channels;
- c) Provide skills training to governments and private sector partners on mechanisms and approaches to support youth in formal and non-formal education and employment, including youth-friendly workplace and supportive supervision practices;
- d) Support the decentralization of education opportunities to improve rural youth's access to education opportunities, through provision of incentives for teachers to undertake rural employment and providing priority funding to rural educational institutes, amongst other effective, evidence-based interventions.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Commitment 10:** Commit to developing and strengthening long-term, stable cooperation between governments, educational institutes, youth-serving and youth-led organisations and private sector so as to provide youth with responsive, appropriate and accessible information on specific labour market demands, ensure youth obtain relevant industry skills, are better connected with the global business network and are internationally competitive.

**Commitment 11:** Commit to developing and implementing support mechanisms that promote youth employment, including self-employment, entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for young people, through the establishment of information and services, practical training and learning opportunities, access to credit and linkages with the broader private sector, both nationally and across Asia.

**Commitment 12:** Commit to developing, implementing and enforcing laws, policies and programmes that support and promote stable, safe, secure and non-discriminatory employment, and youth-friendly working environment for youth, which are aligned with international labour conventions with respect to employment standards and workers' rights of youth.

### Recommendations for Action:

- a) Improve youth access to information and opportunities for career guidance, skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship by developing participatory online information platforms, referral and employment promotion services and peer-to-peer mentoring programmes;
- b) Implement and support national and industry-specific, regulated, youth-friendly work experience and volunteering opportunities for youth, with clear implementation standards and protection for participants;
- c) Promote and advocate for the simplification of business and employment regulatory environments so as to foster youth entrepreneurship, and the training and hiring of youth.

## YOUTH POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

**Commitment 13:** Commit to developing and institutionalising national, holistic, inclusive and progressive youth policies and programmes that uphold the human rights of young people, create an enabling, youth-friendly environment, foster economic opportunities and empower youth, with specific consideration provided to marginalised and vulnerable groups, with dedicated and adequate funding from national and sub-national budgets.

**Commitment 14:** Commit to the recognition, appreciation and meaningful participation of youth by decision-makers in the development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of youth policies and programmes, in order to ensure their full implementation and impact, free from political influence.

**Commitment 15:** Commit to adopting an integrated, coordinated and participatory approach and creating a sustainable intersectoral mechanism for youth development with clear linkages to economic, social, cultural and other policies that promote complete well-being for youth through targeted interventions addressing youth issues from a human rights perspective.

**Recommendations for Action:**

- a) Ensure allocation of government budget to competent and qualified youth-led, youth-serving non-profit organisations, to broaden youth leadership, youth protection, consultation, youth policy development and implementation, research, campaigns and broader youth development;
- b) Organize formal, effective, inter-sectoral, inclusive task forces to develop, design, implement, monitor and evaluate youth policy frameworks, that provide for youth-responsive budgeting, with clear strategies for implementation, and which identify explicit benchmarks and targets for measuring progress on the implementation of the policies;
- c) Develop and implement formal mechanisms for fostering intergovernmental, civil society service coordination, through the establishment of committees and by providing priority funding and support to competent and qualified organisations who participate in interagency coordination on youth issues.

## **YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

**Commitment 16:** Commit to developing and implementing responsive, proactive and progressive youth policies through the creation of strong national policy frameworks, establishing dedicated youth agencies and fostering a supportive environment for youth involvement and engagement.

**Commitment 17:** Commit to promoting and supporting public awareness and advocacy of sustainable development, by utilising youth-friendly engagement activities and accessible communication mediums such as social networks, grassroot community engagement and youth friendly education.

**Commitment 18:** Commit to support youth political participation and civic engagement, at local, national and regional levels, by providing minimum youth representative requirements, establishing youth-supportive environments for participation and engaging with youth-led organisations, so to enable them to play their full part in building stronger, more inclusive and sustainable communities.



**Recommendations for Action:**

- a) Create and support national funding pools for youth-led and youth-oriented civic engagement initiatives, accessed through transparent and competitive selection;
- b) Create and support accessible formal mechanisms for meaningful participation of young people in matters affecting their interests, both nationally, regionally and locally, focusing on enabling youth to make informed decisions, holding governments accountable, and to be agents of change, by utilising youth-friendly communication mediums, such as social media, peer-to-peer mentoring, and formal and non-formal educational activities;
- c) Establish well-supported and managed nation-wide youth volunteering and leadership programs to promote active citizenship and improve social cohesion.