



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

Ambassador Pecsteen

Towards the 5th anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Accelerating Implementation of resolutions 2250 and 2419

New York, 27/4/2020

Dear Mr. President,

Dear colleagues,

I am taking the floor today on behalf of Belgian youth. Exceptionally, our intervention has been drafted by the Belgian “UN Youth delegates.” This programme helps to raise young people’s voices within the UN, but also serves as a channel to get them involved in our national decision making. We can only recommend it.

As youth delegates, we welcome the Secretary General’s report and especially its call for continuous and meaningful youth participation. That we have the opportunity to address the UN Security Council, shows what shape participation can take.

Young people are faced with multiple challenges. For our contribution we have opted to focus on climate change & hate speech.

To start we would like to echo our Government’s commitment to put the topic of Climate and Security on the UNSC’s agenda. The climate crisis, just like the COVID-19 pandemic, is not only a direct threat to the livelihoods of billions of people, it also aggravates factors that contribute to conflict. Given fragile states frequently have younger demographics, young people are specifically vulnerable and sadly, often the first victims of conflict. UN Member States need to address this issue, especially since the youth population across the world is set to increase drastically.

Our generation, will be the first heavily impacted by global warming. As such, should we not be the first group to be consulted? It is only natural for the younger population, especially those most affected, to get a seat at the table when far-reaching adaptation and mitigation policies are being detailed. Our worldwide actions of 2019 have proven that we are a considerable and positive force for change. Young people stand ready to be structurally involved through frequent invitations for concerned thematic and country-specific UNSC briefings.

Secondly, social exclusion, intolerance and racism all contribute to “hate speech”. Hate speech often addresses the young, as victims or as the subjects of indoctrination. Extremism and violent acts following from these discourses could be prevented by more inclusive societies; young people should be offered opportunities to

fulfill their aspirations. In addition, we point to the efficiency of campaigns like the Council of Europe's project "No hate speech" and its dedicated national activities.

To us the Internet is a double-edged sword. Wisely used - it allows free access to information and it serves as a tool of empowerment. However, without adequate governance, it gets fake news to spread, contributes to radicalization, and heightens the risk of misuse of personal data. We appeal to governments, on all levels, to cherish individual freedom while ensuring the safety of young users. This requires a coalition between governments, private businesses and civil society. Platforms gathering relevant material for young people and the attribution of labels that testify to the quality of information are potential tools. The Internet's global nature requires a global approach. We think the UN constitutes the right forum.

Let us conclude by repeating our call for continuous and meaningful youth participation. The vital role of young people in the making and maintenance of peace has been acknowledged. We note the progress made on the implementation of resolutions 2250 et 2419, but challenges remain. We urge UN Member States and donors to support young peacebuilders' work and to protect their human rights. We hope adequate attention will be paid to how climate change & hate speech affect our future security and that member states stand ready to create *jointly* with younger generations a society that guarantees sustainable peace and security. The challenges we face require - now more than ever - a strong and efficient multilateralism. Let us turn the year 2020 – the year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the UN – into an example for this matter.

Finally, we thank the Dominican Presidency for its leadership, and the briefers for their personal engagement.