

Speech by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Permanent
Representative of Belgium

to the United Nations Security Council

Briefing on the implementation of the youth, peace and
security agenda

New York, 17 July 2019

- Check against delivery -

Thank you, Mr President,

Thank you also to Ms Wickramanayake, the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth,

Thank you to Ms Muganda and Ms Ramyar for their presentations.

Belgium welcomes the importance granted to the "Youth, Peace and Security" agenda in the Security Council. Resolutions 2250 and 2419 highlight the immense potential of young people in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Let us work to optimise this potential.

Mr President,

- Estimates project that up to 600 million young adults are living in fragile and conflict-affected States; these young people currently constitute the majority of the population in these countries;
- They also often make up the bulk of the armed and security forces;
- As for young women, they are often the only ones responsible for the economic survival of their families.

Yet, **these young people are all too often excluded from peace processes or** decision-making about the future of their countries.

Their political, social and economic exclusion is a risk factor. These different forms of exclusion can fuel a collective mistrust of the national and international political institutions that are supposed to serve and protect

them. This is why the creation of an environment favourable to the participation and inclusion of young adults in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes is crucial.

Allow me to highlight four points in this regard:

1. **The participation of young people in formal and informal peace and mediation processes can increase their legitimacy and sustainability.** But to move from exclusion to true inclusion, we must recognise young people as equal and powerful actors who can make a positive contribution throughout the peace process. This requires a change in norms, practices and attitudes. It is not impossible; we have recently seen significant youth participation in the peace process in Colombia; we have been able to support the creation of an advisory committee on peace in Afghanistan, which included a youth committee, [we also observed the participation of young people in the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen in 2011].
2. Young people often constitute the majority of military and armed groups. Their views and needs should be central to the **SSR and DDR processes**, as well as to **community violence reduction programmes** and **actions to prevent violent extremism**.
3. Effective inclusion can only be achieved by ensuring that young men and women enjoy **the dignity, protection and quality of life to which they are entitled**. In this regard, Belgium remains firmly committed to the **promotion of human rights**, a fundamental condition for peace and development, and attaches particular importance **to the rights of vulnerable groups**.
4. Finally, we recognise the important role that new information technologies can play; two thirds of the world's Internet users are under 35 years of age. Freed from territorial constraints, young people can now draw inspiration from more varied reference models, as demonstrated by the Independent Study on Youth, Peace and Security. *While new information technologies and social media* can present challenges, they can also cross conflict lines and facilitate the civic participation of young people. For example, civil society has used social

media to involve young people in the high-level forum on the revitalisation of the Peace Agreement in South Sudan.

Mr President,

Belgium will continue to advocate the **greater integration of the "Youth, Peace and Security" agenda into Security Council debates**. It is important that the Council remain informed in a timely and comprehensive manner of the specific situations covered by this agenda. The stakes are high, and Belgium intends to make its contribution.

Thank you very much.

