

Fellow Youth, Excellencies, delegates, Good morning. All protocols observed.

I am Sameh Kamel, a young surgeon from Egypt, and I serve one of the two elected organising partners of the Major Group for Children and Youth here at the United Nations, alongside my colleague Yugratna. I flew all the way from Egypt to be here, but so did all these children and youth in the gallery right now - who are the human faces of the 2030 Agenda.

MGCY serves as a designated self-led youth constituency for young people engaging in over 50+ intergovernmental and 200+ multi-stakeholder processes. With a membership of over 10,000 youth-led, child-led and youth and child-serving organizations, we engage young people in the UN system on topics ranging from climate change, humanitarian affairs, human rights and migration.

I will present some of our recommendations from these preparatory processes:

On the Pact for the Future

Excellencies, regarding the Summit of the Future: young people have been involved in Our Common Agenda since the UN75 process, convening an Our Common Agenda Youth Partners Group. Additionally, a dedicated Youth Working Group on the Summit of the Future was established in October 2022 to bring collective youth perspectives to the Pact, with more than 30 youth consultations hosted to date. Young people's demands are clear:

First, we demand an urgent reform of the international financial architecture to be outlined in the Pact. To us, this is not just about balancing in the text and negotiations - it's about our lives which must not be spent living with the consequences of illegitimate debts. The boards of the Multilateral Development Banks must make an observer seat available for the youth constituency, learning from the models at the CTCN and Science Policy Business Forum.

Second, regarding the Declaration on Future Generations, we need urgent, bold, and responsive multilateralism to protect current and future generations. We have seen many Envoys come and go, including a Youth Envoy. How will a Future Generations Envoy change that? We are discussing with our constituencies on the three options presented in the draft, and we recommend that more progressive models are pursued, such as a dedicated office or committee on future generations.

Third, the ECOSOC Youth Forum - which is the largest and most diverse youth forum in the UN - should serve as a platform for stock-take and review of youth specific commitments in the Pact and its annexes. The current format of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, which is jointly organised by UN agencies and youth constituencies, should be retained and strengthened.

On Poverty Eradication (SDG1)

Excellencies, eradicating poverty requires co-created solutions and accountable governance, with meaningful youth participation in decision-making and collaboration between youth, governments, private sector, and civil society, including under-represented youth groups such as refugees, migrants, and indigenous youth at all levels. Ahead of next year's World Social Summit, we call on member states to take concerted action on debt relief and tax justice, invest in universal social protection systems and recognise the intersection of poverty eradication and resilience.

On Food Systems (SDG2)

In past decades, the main expectation of food systems has been to produce enough food to feed the world. Today, as the world grows increasingly aware of the environmental and social costs of focusing exclusively on food security, our agenda must be more ambitious. Youth have been innovative key agents in food systems for many years - but we cannot do it alone. Today, young people and their governments need to continue to partner to co-lead the change that is essential for the people, the planet, and the present and future of food security.

On Climate Action (SDG13)

To promote sustainability and advance climate action that leaves no one behind, we must embrace alternative economic and financial models, such as the circular economy and community-based economics, that prioritize intergenerational equity over short-term profits. Financing, including for adaptation, loss and damage and mitigation, must be needs-based, flexible according to the best available data and science, and easily accessible to developing countries and vulnerable communities. We further call for the UN, member states and financial institutions to support and incentivize youth engagement, innovation and climate and sustainability initiatives through youth-tailored financial mechanisms.

On Peace and Security (SDG16)

The Summit of the Future, Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and ongoing Security Council reform offer opportunities to enhance meaningful youth participation in security and peacebuilding discourses. We urge member states to commit to comprehensive strategies and dedicated funding for the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, including protecting youth in civic spaces. As youth, we call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to activities targeting civilians, vulnerable populations, and aid workers in and around conflict-affected zones globally, as well as call for the facilitation of humanitarian and medical aid entry.

On SRHR

Excellencies, the denial of young people's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and their bodily autonomy, is a critical violation of their human rights and undermines progress towards gender equality. As we mark the 30th anniversary of the

International Conference on Population and Development, and recall the commitments made in Cairo and at the Beijing World Conference on Women, we call on member states to take concrete measures to guarantee and uphold SRHR and justice for all, ensuring every young person has access to comprehensive sexuality education and the full range of SRHR services, free from stigma and discrimination.

We also call upon you to eliminate all legal, structural, financial and systemic barriers to SRHR, such as out-of-pocket expenditures, third-party consent and criminalization of abortion. The language on SRHR must be maintained in the Pact - there can be no backsliding on rights and choices.

On Chemicals, Waste and Pollution

Financing, monitoring and actions on pollution and health - including plastic pollution and the sound management of chemicals and waste - must be significantly scaled up to meet the goals of the new Global Framework on Chemicals, UN Common Approach to Pollution, and existing MEAs. In the immediate months ahead, we must further deliver on an effective, legally-binding Global Plastics Treaty across the full-life cycle of plastic pollution and establish a multidisciplinary Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention, free from conflicts of interest.

Excellencies, despite this growing momentum on chemicals, waste and pollution action, children's environmental health remains severely neglected. We call upon member states and the UN to develop a coordinated agenda addressing chemical pollution issues critical to children's development and health and prioritise this in the Summit of the Future process.

On Supporting Human Rights Defenders

Excellencies, it is not enough to simply "engage" those from grassroots and minorities at transient events or consultations. We need frontline communities in long-term leadership roles. When peaceful environmental and human rights defenders and advocates are silenced, our communities, our causes, and our futures are silenced with them. We call upon you to protect environmental and human right defenders. We stand in solidarity with peaceful young protesters and peaceful college and school students all around the world that continue to face hurdles in their advocacy.

On Civil Society Engagement

The Major Groups and Other Stakeholder Mechanism serve as a designated and universal space for the engagement of civil society in multiple UN avenues. It brings together sectors of society and stakeholder groups on various themes ranging from science and technology, food security to women's participation and ageing, with cross-sectoral and intersectional engagement. Therefore, whenever new processes and summits are initiated, especially under the auspices of the General Assembly, their engagement must be ensured at the inception stage itself and co-designed in partnership with relevant Major Groups and stakeholders. We should not have to advocate for

engagement in new processes from scratch. Furthermore, we call for establishing an agenda item on “strengthening civil society engagement” in the High-Level Committee on Programmes. This agenda must address concrete issues, such as requiring each UN agency to nominate a staff member as a civil society focal point and developing a handbook on meaningful civil society engagement in partnership with Major Groups and stakeholders.

On Supporting Youth

The Major Group for Children and Youth works with informal and grassroots groups globally, including those in the developing countries. At the same time, the engagement of youth can be enhanced by better adjusting to the administrative and support infrastructure needs of youth organisations. It is not enough to provide grants to UN agencies to do programmatic work on youth. We need to meet young people where they are at. Building on the models seen in Stockholm+50 youth engagement, GFMD process and others, we call upon member states and the UN to provide direct financing support to youth constituencies so they can self-organise their participation.

On Youth Tokenization

We call your attention to the document titled: Principles and Barriers for Meaningful Youth Engagement. The document is written by youth and published by DESA, and highlights 5 principles for meaningful youth engagement. Youth engagement must be: Self-organised, Legally Mandated, Rights Based, Designated, Well Resourced and Accountable. No more youth advisory boards or panels that are appointed or handpicked by UN agencies without any consultations or feedback mechanisms. Youth are calling for representative structures driven by youth that are universal and equitable.

As I conclude, I reiterate our call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in all conflicts across the world. The prevalence of impunity in the face of clear violations of international humanitarian and human rights law leads to a growing loss of faith in international soft law and reconciliation. We remain extremely concerned about the significant number of dead and displaced persons, the majority of whom are vulnerable women, children, and youth. As children and youth, we refuse to be the mass casualties of a military-industrial complex.

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Organizing Partner