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Report of the UA-MUN Youth Assembly Secretary General

Introduction:

Model United Nations is a powerful tool for better educating developing individuals on currently transpiring global issues. MUN has a distinct character, through which, participants are granted the chance to participate in a unique one off event. The value of MUN simulations has been recognized by both the UN Department of Public Information (UNDPI) and the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA).¹ The UNDPPI specifically articulates, that MUN is 'a popular exercise for those interested in learning more about the UN.'² The UNA-USA recognizes the capacity MUN shares in introducing young leaders to the world of diplomacy, negotiations, and decision making.³ More specifically, UNA-USA directly recognizes the capacities MUN shares when pertaining to fostering global citizenship in developing individuals.⁴

In January 2017, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres inspiringly stated: "At Model UN, you broaden your horizons. By learning and networking, you can be part of the UN's efforts to establish peace, secure human rights, and enable all people to live in dignity."⁵

Through his words the UN SG Guterres, recognizes participants of an MUN simulation as international actors for all intensive purposes. This is in line with the current UN approach, foreseeing the inclusion of stakeholders in the implementation of the Sustainable Development

¹ UNDPPI, *What is UN4MUN?* Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from: <https://outreach.un.org/mun/>; UNA-USA, *Model UN. Bridging the Education Gap and Creating Global Citizens.* Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un>

² UNDPPI, *What is UN4MUN?* Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from: <https://outreach.un.org/mun/>.

³ UNA-USA, *Model UN. Bridging the Education Gap and Creating Global Citizens.* Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un>

⁴ UNA-USA, *Model UN. Bridging the Education Gap and Creating Global Citizens.* Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un>

⁵ UNDPPI, *What is UN4MUN?* Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from: <https://outreach.un.org/mun/>

Agenda.⁶ Indeed, the aspects of broad participation and inclusion has been acknowledged in the SDGs themselves through SDG 16, targets 7 and 8, on participatory institutions and policy making.⁷ Considering this notion, the role of stakeholders consistently receives recognition within high level events related to the Agenda of 2030 hosted by the United Nations.⁸

Only in the US, the number of high school and college students involved in MUNs is estimated to be some 180,000.⁹ A number which can be directly interpreted, as young advocates for the Sustainable Development Agenda. As citizens educated on global issues and the international agenda, MUN'ers are the best candidates to involve in global policies and help with the implementation of sustainable targets.

One may ask why this inclusion is relevant. It is the specific vision of the UN, that, working in conjunction with organizations relative to civil society for the achievement of advancing the ideals of each institution.¹⁰ Practice has shown that partnering with stakeholders can improve the success rate of international action. By implementing such a practice, the manifestation of large scale agendas is more easily achieved as the consideration of marginalized groups is taken into account, in turn, enforceability of these same goals is enhanced as more members are inclined to comply with the agreed upon standards.¹¹ Considering this notion in accordance with the SDG's, the only means through which the goals can be truly achieved is in an international community that considers all stakeholders.¹² As a consequence, the involvement of the MUN community in advocating for the SDGs may possibly generate greater awareness, therefore, contribute to implementing positive change successfully pertaining to the targets and indicators related to the agenda of 2030.

This report seeks to foster the establishment of new methods through which the MUN community can best evolve into an effective SDGs stakeholder based on the challenges and questions such an initiative presents.

⁶ UNDESA, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. *Major Groups and Other Stakeholders*, Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups.html>

⁷ UN General Assembly, 09/25/2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/70/L.1.

⁸ *Inter alia*, UN News Centre, 18/04/2017. *UN forum highlight importance of stronger partnerships for financing sustainable development*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56577#.WXnDJYiLTIU>

⁹ Best Delegate, 11/05/2007. *How Big is Model United Nations?* Retrieved from <http://bestdelegate.com/how-big-is-model-united-nations/>

¹⁰ UN. *Civil Society*. Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/sections/resources/civil-society/>

¹¹ ACSC – African Civil Society Circle, 2016. *The Roles of Civil Society in Localising the Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 8.

¹² ACSC – African Civil Society Circle, 2016. *The Roles of Civil Society in Localising the Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 4.

I. Background

The Role of Stakeholders in the Implementation of SDGs

As highlighted by literature and distinguished scholars,¹³ the main lesson derived from the UN Millennium Declaration (A/55/L.2) and the so called MDGs has been to expand notions of inclusivity within the confines of society to meet global targets.¹⁴

In the first section of the Millennium Declaration entitled, *Values and Principle*, it can be noted at subsection 5, that:

“We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people. [...] Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable. These efforts must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and are formulated and implemented with their effective participation.”¹⁵

The need for global partnership and inclusion has been strengthened through the Agenda of 2030 (A/70/L.1).¹⁶ The regulation explicitly states, in the Preamble under the section Partnership:

“We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.”¹⁷

Introduced during the Earth Summit of 1992, there are 9 Major stakeholders with whom the UN interacts in the field of action implementation. These Major Groups, are often recalled as MGO’s, include: 1. Women; 2. Children and Youth; 3. Indigenous Peoples; 4. Non-Governmental Organizations; 5. Local Authorities; 6. Workers and Trade Unions; 7. Business and Industry; 8. Scientific and Technological Community; 9. Farmers.¹⁸ It is interesting to note, how the UN began developing a conscious consideration of children and the next generation as stakeholders in 1992. Considering the progress created in 1992, the UN found it necessary to assign the MGO’s a new role in the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

¹³ *Inter alia*, Gupta, J., Vegelin, C., 2016. *Sustainable Development Goals and Inclusive Development*.

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, 09/08/2000. *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. A/55/L.2.

¹⁵ UN General Assembly, 09/08/2000. *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. A/55/L.2.

¹⁶ UN General Assembly, 09/25/2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/70/L.1.

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, 09/25/2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/70/L.1.

¹⁸ UNDESA, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. *Major Groups and Other Stakeholders*. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos>

Investing in youth, is an attempt by the international community to procure a brighter future. Considering this notion it is imperative, that, greater significance is allocated to youth-led groups in negotiating and advocating for SDGs targets. As pointed out by the World Bank in its historic report of 2007, “*the decisions that will affect young people’s well-being and societies, are those that shape the foundational human capital to be productive workers, family heads, citizens and community leaders.*”¹⁹ The impact young people exhibit on the future is not solely ideological as youth leadership represents the next generation. As this is an undeniable reality, decisions must be taken in order to better produce capable, skilled, and intelligent individuals.²⁰ In fact, this has very practical outcomes even for the financial branch of society, as economic and technological growth requires constant refinement of an individual's capacities to accomplish global goals.²¹ One of the main theories to be considered in the field of youth participation, is one describing the three youth lenses driving policies. These key facets are as follows: 1. Opportunities; 2. Capabilities; and, 3. Second Chances. Finding the necessary application to all policies affecting human capital – such as economic governance, education, training, health services, welfare, family services and infrastructure – the three youth lenses are able to inspire and deliver friendly policies to a younger generation.²² Ultimately, youth participation is linked to ownership and mutual accountability²³ and for these reasons the success of the SDGs is significantly linked to stakeholders inclusion.²⁴

II. The UN and Youth: Past International Action:

Given the stress on youth inclusion as highlighted by both institutions and experts, the UN initially began acknowledging youth demands in 1977.²⁵ The United Nations initially began their foray into this venture by developing guidelines ruling the channels of communications with youth activists (A/RES/32/135).²⁶ The basis for this resolution presents two main aspects: 1. the need for youth

¹⁹ World Bank, 2007. *World Development Report 2007. Development and the Next Generation*, p. 5.

²⁰ World Bank, 2007. *World Development Report 2007. Development and the Next Generation*, p. 5.

²¹ World Bank, 2007. *World Development Report 2007. Development and the Next Generation*, p. 6.

²² World Bank, 2007. *World Development Report 2007. Development and the Next Generation*, p. 11.

²³ Child Fund Australia, 2012. *The Role of Child and Youth Participation in Development Effectiveness*.

²⁴ Pisano, U., Berger, G., 2016. *Stakeholders Activities in Support of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs Implementation. A view on current activities to support implementation*. ESDN Quarterly Report 41.

²⁵ UN General Assembly, 12/16/1977. *Channels of communication with youth and youth organizations*. A/RES/32/135.

²⁶ UN General Assembly, 12/16/1977. *Channels of communication with youth and youth organizations*. A/RES/32/135.

participation in order to achieve the objectives included in the UN Charter;²⁷ and, 2. the value of contributions that youth activists can provide in strengthening cooperation among Member States, and in promoting equity and justice.²⁸ The guidelines set in 1977 provide for a dual approach, focused on a bottom-to top mechanism at the regional and national level. The same system follows a top-down mechanism at international level.²⁹ As a consequence, regional commissions were requested to take into consideration youth organizations in the policy making process (bottom-up mechanism), while the UN outreach budget was intensified with the scope of increasing media presence and transfer information to young people (top-down mechanism).³⁰

Another significant step for the purposes of youth inclusion within the confines of UN policies, is made in 1995 with the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond* (A/RES/50/81).³¹ Point 104 of the Annex to the Resolution 50/81 (Under Section J. Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making) marks a milestone for the partnership between the UN and youth organizations. Indeed, point 104 states:

*“The capacity for progress of our societies is based, among other elements, on their capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in the building and designing of the future. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.”*³²

The proposals outlined in Annex 107 include: 1. improving access to information for young people; 2. strengthening educational opportunities over global issues and rights; 3. encouraging youth organizations by providing financial support and know-how; 4. taking into account youth action in implementing and evaluating policies; 5. encouraging cooperation among youth organizations; 6. inviting governments to promote initiatives of youth involvement, such as the inclusion of young representatives in their delegations to the GA.³³

Since then, UN Resolutions stress the role of youth activism in improving life and well-being,³⁴ however the question of how to increase youth participation within the UN is still an

²⁷ UN General Assembly, 12/16/1977. *Channels of communication with youth and youth organizations*. A/RES/32/135, Preamble, clause 2.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, 12/16/1977. *Channels of communication with youth and youth organizations*. A/RES/32/135, Preamble, clause 3.

²⁹ UN General Assembly, 12/16/1977. *Channels of communication with youth and youth organizations*. A/RES/32/135.

³⁰ UN General Assembly, 12/16/1977. *Channels of communication with youth and youth organizations*. A/RES/32/135.

³¹ UN General Assembly, 12/14/1995. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. A/RES/50/81.

³² UN General Assembly, 12/14/1995. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. A/RES/50/81.

³³ UN General Assembly, 12/14/1995. *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. A/RES/50/81.

³⁴ *Inter alia*, UN General Assembly, 01/18/2002. *Policies and programmes involving youth*. A/RES/56/117.

impellent one. A pivotal overview of further steps to be undertaken is provided by the historic Security Council Resolution on youth, peace and security (SC/RES/2250).³⁵

As brilliantly underlined by the former UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi:

*"This is a major breakthrough in our collective efforts to change the predominantly negative narrative on youth and recognize the significant role of young people in peacebuilding. Youth have for too long been cast away as either the perpetrators of violence or its victims. With this resolution the Security Council recognizes the important contributions that young people make in countering violent extremism and supporting peacebuilding efforts around the world."*³⁶

The role of such resolutions and initiatives is highlighted by the comment made by Jordan's representative, Ms. Dina Kawar, on the SC resolution 2250, *'What we seek is to draw the world's attention to ensure that young people are given the attention they deserve at a time when the world is a theatre for an increasing number of negative issues'*³⁷

Youth-led Organizations and SDGs

After considering which policies have been promoted in order to foster youth participation using the aforementioned mechanisms, it is time to give a look at which practical actions have been pursued by youth led organizations in the field of sustainable development cooperation.

A first relevant example in this area is offered by the UN Youth Delegate Program, an umbrella initiative that promotes the inclusion of young delegates to the national delegations of Member States to the UN. The roles of young delegates includes "providing input to their delegation on issues related to youth and participate in their delegation's general work through attending meetings and informal negotiations."³⁸

Another large scale example of youth participation is offered by the consultative status with the ECOSOC. As of September 1st, 2016, there are 4507 NGOs enjoying the consultative status with the ECOSOC,³⁹ a relevant number of them being youth led organizations. The list of youth led organizations with consultative status to the ECOSOC includes the AIESEC International and the

³⁵ UN Security Council, 12/09/2015. S/RES/2250.

³⁶ Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, 12/09/2015. Press Release. *UN Security Council Adopts Historic Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/12/un-security-council-adopts-historic-resolution-on-youth-peace-and-security/>

³⁷ UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 12/09/2015. *Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250 (2015), Urges Member States to Increase Representation of Youth in Decision-Making at All Levels*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

³⁸ UNDSPD, Youth. *UN Youth Delegate Programme*. Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do/youth-delegate-programme.html>

³⁹ UNDESA, NGO Branch. *Basic Facts about ECOSOC Status*. Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <http://csonet.org/?menu=100>

European Law Students Association, just to name some.⁴⁰ Questions pertaining to the contribution of such organizations, may outline what they can accomplish in support of the SDG's. To give an example of the types of actions that can be pursued by youth led organization, we can look at the AIESEC Youth Action Summit held in December 2015 at the UN headquarters.⁴¹ The outcome of the Summit produced three main objectives for the AIESEC action in promoting SDGs: 1. Create awareness on the Global Goals; 2. Foster Engagement around the Global Goals; 3. Take action on the Global Goals. Moreover, the involvement of the AIESEC led to the Youth4GlobalGoals initiative which aims to "activate the leadership potential of young people by engaging them in purposeful and cross-cultural projects around the globe designed to impact the Sustainable Development Goals."⁴²

III. Taking Action and Possible Solutions:

There is no doubt that the UN is showing a growing interest in including young people in its policy making process and it is actively committed in promoting youth participation at the regional and national level. At the same time, MUN simulations are the proof that young people have a strong interest in understanding the UN and global issues. Questions outlining the relationship between MUN and youth participation in global affairs may outline how they may be further connected, and precautions the MUN can take in order to promote sustainable development. MUN simulations are a fantastic platform for young leaders to develop new ideas for the future. MUN Clubs and Associations in all forms can be used to raise awareness over SDGs, engage young people in the Agenda 2030, and promote small actions that can contribute in meeting SDGs targets and indicators. A brilliant example of this is offered by the Bonn International MUN, which has been organized as a green conference since 2009 with the main commitment of being as climate-neutral as possible.⁴³ As little as it can be, this commitment actually contributes to SDGs 11, 13 and 15.

⁴⁰ UN ECOSOC, 12/29/2016. *List of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council as of 1 September 2016*. E/2016/INF/5.

⁴¹ Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, 12/18/2015. *AIESEC commitment towards the Global Goals for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/12/aiesec-commitment-towards-the-global-goals-for-sustainable-development/>

⁴² Youth4GlobalGoal. Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <http://youth4globalgoals.org/youth4gg/>

⁴³ BIMUN/SINUB e.V. *Green Conference*. Accessed July 2017, Retrieved from <https://www.bimun.org/green-conference>

IV. Questions to Consider:

- How can MUN Clubs and/or MUN Association organizing MUNs promote awareness over the SDGs?
- Which kind of initiatives can be envisaged in order to promote field advocacy for SDGs?
- What is the potential of international platforms in reaching young people and involving them in policy making processes?
- How can the MUN community partner with the UN to promote sustainable development?
- Which practical initiatives can the MUN community start in order to meet SDGs targets?
- Why is youth so important? What is the reason for 193 UN Member States to listen to young voices and make an effort to meet their needs?
- Can the MUN community take further precautions in order to better support the SDG's?
- How can the UN effectively improve youth cooperation and inclusion?
- What does the Resolution 2250 change in the way the UN perceives youth?
- What can still be improved in terms of cooperation between the UN and youth?

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