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Special Bi-annual Panel on Youth and Human Rights

Written Statement by Women's Federation for World Peace

International and Co Signatories

## **Role of Youth in Peace**

Since 2015, the world has witnessed an inspiring and overdue acknowledgment of the pivotal role that young people play in ensuring global peace and security. This recognition did not materialize in a vacuum but resulted from the tireless efforts of over 11,000 passionate young advocates hailing from more than 110 countries. Their relentless commitment to a more peaceful and secure world culminated in the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2250, Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda, a historic moment that we commemorate today. Moreover, as to our global commitment to the SDGs, we look ahead to the UN Summit of the Future, while reminded of the pivotal role that youth will play in shaping the trajectory of our shared global future.

The resolution impels the Member States to do more than simply acknowledge the importance of youth. It calls upon us to empower young people with a greater voice in decision-making processes, be it at the grassroots level or on the world stage. It urges us to explore innovative mechanisms that enable their meaningful participation in peace processes, recognizing that their insights, energy, and creativity are indispensable assets in building a more peaceful, secure, and just world.

As individuals, guided by the principles of justice, transparency, and world citizenship, become empowered to self-autonomy and the obligation to act in good conduct towards their fellow human beings, cohesive societies become an evident outcome. The common challenge facing all nations and creeds alike is to rise above, not only the outdated means towards the establishment of ideal peaceful societies but to find new ends that allow for more inclusive, just, and humane societies and institutions.

The WFWPI UN Office Geneva, together with support from ECOSOC accredited members of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva, has engaged in the following youth-centered programs between mid 2022 and mid 2023:

- Reached over 200 plus youth on programs such as Youth training on UN Advocacy, Curriculum training, Human Rights Internship program, Youth Peace Conference and Youth Conference for UN CSW.
- WFWPI Youth Peace Conference II : Hosted the Youth Peace Accord with the focus on Peace in the Korean Peninsula with Young People from Korea and all over the world, delegating as world leaders who achieved a successful peace agreement and thoughtful re-unification plan.
- Human Rights Internship program (4 cycles): Engaged in advocacy at the UN on serious Human Rights concerns in countries such as Nigeria, Lebanon, Jordan, UK, Canada and many more through our youth interns who researched and published advocacy journals, drafted statements and submitted them to various UN bodies. ( Human Rights Council, Peacebuilding Commission, Commission on the Status of Women)
- 100% of our participants of our UN Advocacy training program at the UN in Geneva who also were provided with the opportunity to speak as a delegate of WFWPI at the UN Social Forum 2022 reported that it is their first time at such a professional program, providing both skill development and opportunity to be at the UN and voice their views and commitments for a better world.
- Through the NGO CSW Global Youth Conference with a main leadership of WFWPI, we were able to prepare and engage nearly 150 young people for the UN CSW 2022, providing in depth debates and a set of Agreed Conclusions forwarded to the CSW 66 Chair and Secretariat, and UN Women.

Women's Federation for World Peace International and partners believe that youth are the agents of change and transformation. They are at the forefront of the global calling for world peace, and their passion and vitality can be harnessed- with some wisdom from elders. We call upon nations and their institutions, which are dominated by adults to consider equal empowerment of youth and their creative outlooks. This we insist to be done regardless of their creed, gender, religion, or socioeconomic background. Echoing the words of Kofi Annan who pinpointed it best, "Any society that does not succeed in tapping into the energy and creativity of its youth will be left behind.". Therefore, we strongly believe in the

systematic, institutionalized, and cross-generational encouragement of the ideas and efforts generated by the younger generations as a crucial part of the pursuit of peace.

Youth play a crucial role, not only as innovative leaders in their communities, educators, and role models to their peers and those that are younger than them. They are also vital members of and streams of inspiration to some of the political and economic systems in their societies and nation, even if underreported.

Malala Yousafzai stands as an exemplary youth who not only ignited the discourse on the right to education, and gender equality, but who made significant contributions leading to a global paradigm shift. Similarly, the young Syrian refugee athlete, Yusra Mardini's, heroic act of saving refugees' lives while being under refuge and, the Iranian sixteen-year-old Mona Mahmudnizhad's, unwavering belief in the principle of unity in diversity as her only crime, demonstrates remarkable resilience, unshakeable empathy, and an upright character as well as proving youth to be the catalysts of constructive change and improvement.

These beautiful youthful efforts, unconstrained by political and geographic boundaries, are proof of courage and hope. They fought for a cause greater than themselves for their love of humanity alone. With every heroic act, humanity is witnessing the very transformation of paralysis, indifference, and pessimism taking the new shape of innocent naivety, a strong sense of justice, and contagious optimism.

Nevertheless, it takes a village to ensure the sustainability and protection of these efforts. We strongly urge the United Nations, UN bodies, the nations of the world, and their institutions to protect and defend these efforts at all costs as well as setting policies and systems that allow youth to participate in governance and decision-making mechanisms of their respective societies, through an institutionalized intergenerational approach. Similarly, catering to the seed's potential of becoming a beautiful and fruit-bearing tree, we urge, would only bring success to all societies and humanity. Let each community attend to its local needs and each nation be guided by the learnings generated by its communities.

We strongly urge that these steps ought to be guided by the overarching principles of peace and justice. As we believe that peace is an outcome of justice and justice relies on the equality of all. Peace and Human Rights cannot be understood in isolation from one another.

In the spirit of unity and shared responsibility as a human family, let us reaffirm our commitment to the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda. Let us ensure that the promises enshrined in Resolution 2250 and Our Common Agenda are not hollow words, but tangible actions that uplift and empower young people to be the architects of a safer and more harmonious world. Let us welcome the new global order in its fullest diversity.