



Peace begins with youth

FACAMP Model United Nations Research Guide

Editors

Patricia Capelini Borelli

Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi

Roberta Silva Machado

Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

FACAMP Model United Nations – FAMUN 2026

RESEARCH GUIDE

Peace begins with Youth

Authors

Ana Carolina Galvão Martins	Julia Beatriz de Oliveira Castro
Anna Luiza De Souza Padua	Kauê Vítor Panta
Beatriz Fornazari Spoto Corrêa	Letícia Pereira Malaman
Caique Colombo Pavan	Livia Magalhães Diogenes dos Anjos
Carolina Barbosa Torres	Lorena Andrioli
Elisa Soares Bueno	Maria Eduarda Rodrigues Mazzuia
Emmanuelle Rodrigues Murer	Maria Laura Chicaroni Pinto
Enzo Semeghini Hernesto	Mariana Pera de Almeida
Gabriel Caetano	Mariana Rodrigues Antunes
Gabriel Ferreira Girardi	Mateus Antônio Tobias Ferreira
Gabriel Silva de Oliveira	Rafael Bento da Silva Andreetta
Giovanna Caldeira	Rafael José Zenaro
Giovanna Massinelli	Renato Magalhães Rosa
Giovanni Ferreira Alves	Sofia Baptista Kneubil
Guilherme Romeu Gentil Ferreira Ramos	Sofia Campos Ariceto
Heitor Torres Neves	Victor Benvegnú Araújo
Ian Augusto Miola	Vitória de Salvi Gallo de Camargo
Isabela Leal Almeida Bracalente	

Advisors

Professor Patricia Capelini Borelli
Professor Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi
Professor Roberta Silva Machado
Professor Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

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ABSTRACT

In the context of a crisis of multilateralism, intensifying climate change, steadily rising military spending, and the handling of violent conflicts, this Research Guide proposes that the discussion on peace cannot be left solely to governments and institutions: it must be cultivated by individuals, especially younger generations who are already shaping the future. With this objective in mind, the Guide is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the topic of Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation, addressed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee, and the positions held by political groups in negotiations. The second part advances the discussion on Youth and human rights from the perspective of the United Nations Youth Council (UNYC), a futuristic body conceived as a potential new space for youth participation within the UN. The analysis also incorporates the perspectives of regional, youth-led non-governmental organizations on the subject. By focusing on youth, the Research Guide contributes to the dialogue regarding the need to actively include this important political group in the future of global governance, particularly in peacebuilding efforts.

Keywords: United Nations; General Assembly; Youth Council; Disarmament and Non-proliferation; Human Rights.

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PREFACE

In a context marked by the crisis of multilateralism and the intensification of violent conflicts, peacebuilding stands as one of the key challenges of contemporary global governance. While wars and other forms of violence continue to inflict severe human, social, and environmental consequences, the multilateral mechanisms available to the United Nations (UN) for conflict prevention and resolution face increasing difficulties in effectively responding to the transformations of the International System. Given this scenario, it is essential to rethink not only the UN's role in peacebuilding, a foundational pillar of the organization, but also to discuss the actors who actively participate in this process.

This Research Guide is based on the premise that peace cannot be the sole responsibility of governments and international institutions. It must also be cultivated by individuals through everyday practices of dialogue, respect, solidarity, and cooperation. This perspective lies at the heart of the UN's Peace begins with Me campaign¹, which highlights everyone's responsibility in building peace. Inspired by this initiative, the theme of the FACAMP Model United Nations (FAMUN) 2026, Peace begins with Youth, acknowledges the pivotal role young people play in this process. Far from being merely a group affected by present-day decisions, young people are political agents already engaged in social movements and significant political processes at the local and national levels, and their direct involvement in multilateral mechanisms will be decisive in shaping the future of global governance in the coming decades.

The multidimensional nature of contemporary challenges has a profound impact on youth. The proliferation of weapons and the persistence of violent conflicts, for instance, are linked not only to international security but also to human rights protection, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Similarly, climate change and environmental degradation specifically affect the human rights of younger generations to health, food, and education. The unique ways in which young people experience these impacts underscore the need for their participation in decision-making processes on these issues.

¹ Details of the UN's Peace begins with Me campaign can be accessed here: <https://peacebeginswithme.un.org>.

Diversity of participation is also a crucial aspect, given that the various groups comprising the youth population have distinct characteristics depending on their country of residence, social class, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity.

Considering these challenges, this Research Guide is divided into two parts. Part 1, titled Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation, presents the debate within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee regarding the importance of youth participation in efforts toward disarmament and the non-proliferation of both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. In this area, UN Member States face the challenge of devising disarmament education initiatives, awareness campaigns, and public policy discussions aimed at the meaningful inclusion and participation of young people in these efforts, without resorting to tokenism, that is, the merely symbolic and superficial inclusion of youth in these matters. One outcome of this discussion was the launch of the Youth4Disarmament initiative² by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, with support from the government of the Republic of Korea. However, despite existing youth mobilization, few countries have implemented actual initiatives to ensure the meaningful inclusion and participation of young people in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, as noticeable in the positions taken by political groups such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union and the League of Arab States, and the European Union and others. This challenge is further compounded by rising military spending, a consequence of the proliferation of wars and violent conflicts worldwide.

Part 2, titled Youth and human rights³, analyzes the consolidation of this agenda within the UN framework based on two central axes: the recognition of young people's human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and their human right to participate in global decision-making processes regarding climate change. The analysis begins with the ambiguous position of youth: while young people are among the groups most affected by social vulnerabilities and the impacts of the climate crisis, they also demonstrate a growing capacity for political mobilization and leadership in

² The Youth4Disarmament initiative can be accessed here: <https://youth4disarmament.org/>.

³ The topic Youth and human rights is debated by Member States at the UN Human Rights Council. FAMUN 2026 proposes its discussion by the UN Youth Council, a futuristic simulation that places young people as key players in the organization's decision-making processes.

advocating for climate justice. The research examines how environmental degradation and extreme weather events affect the fundamental rights of young people, highlighting the rights to life, health, food, housing, and education; it then outlines the political, social, and financial barriers that still limit their effective participation in global decision-making processes. Drawing on the experiences and stances of youth-led non-governmental organizations from four regions – Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Europe and others – the analysis highlights both the inequalities shaping youth participation in climate governance and the role of youth-led movements in promoting human rights, climate justice, and environmental protection.

By addressing the role of youth across diverse issues, such as disarmament, non-proliferation, human rights, and climate change, this Research Guide seeks to present evidence regarding the importance of actively including young people in decision-making processes and in shaping multilateral responses to contemporary global challenges. By placing youth at the center of debates traditionally led primarily by states and multilateral organizations, FAMUN 2026 invites young people not to wait for the future to participate in building the world they will inhabit. By strengthening their voices and recognizing their capacity for decision-making, this Guide aims to help expand the role of young people as an active political force capable of driving change and contributing to the transformation of a global order that is more peaceful, cooperative, just, and sustainable.

Professor Patricia Capelini Borelli
Professor Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi
Professor Roberta Silva Machado
Professor Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

Editors

PART 1:

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

YOUTH, DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION

PREFACE TO PART I

Dear delegate,

We are delighted to have you participate in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at the FACAMP Model United Nations (FAMUN) 2026. We are proud that you have accepted the challenge of joining this simulation and embracing the enriching experience it offers, both academically and personally. Please know that we are here to support you in every step of the way, from your initial research to the simulation itself, ensuring you have the best possible experience at the conference and maximize your personal growth.

Guided by the belief that peace begins with youth, the FAMUN 2026 team invites you to reflect on, discuss, and develop actions that address the importance of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction within the current international political landscape. Armed conflicts are becoming increasingly frequent, and international tensions, compounded by the threat of weapons of mass destruction, remain at the heart of the global security agenda. Addressing these challenges requires mobilizing young people to reflect on our needs and priorities and to demand immediate action. FAMUN 2026 provides the ideal environment to discuss these issues. Here, you will encounter new perspectives, learn to negotiate differences, and join forces to drive change. Young people have a voice and deserve to be heard; that is why we invite you to act now!

The first step in preparing for FAMUN is familiarizing yourself with the simulation topic. To assist you, we have prepared this Research Guide to support and direct your study of the theme: "Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation." The opening pages of the guide introduce the significance of the UNGA and the key challenges to be addressed during the simulation. We also outline the positions of various political groups on the topic to help you formulate your negotiation strategy for the event.

With this theme, we invite you to rethink how we respond to armed conflicts and to highlight the importance of young people mobilizing to secure their place, not only in states' speeches, but also at negotiating tables and, above

all, in decision-making forums. This must be done collectively, leaving no one behind. We hope that through dialogue, diplomacy, and consensus, we can find solutions that value youth participation in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and recognize just how essential we are!

Sincerely,

UNGA 1 Team – High School

Renato Magalhães Rosa – Chair
Ana Carolina Galvão Martins – Vice-Chair
Mariana Rodrigues Antunes – Secretary

UNGA 2 Team – High School

Maria Eduarda Rodrigues Mazzuia – Chair
Guilherme Romeu Gentil Ferreira Ramos – Vice-Chair
João Vitor Bueno – Secretary

UNGA 3 Team – High School

Sofia Campos Ariceto – Chair
Giovanna Novaes Caldeira – Vice-Chair
Caíque Colombo Pavan – Secretary

UNGA 4 Team – High School

Maria Laura Chicaroni Pinto – Chair
Rafael Andreetta – Vice-Chair
Gabriel Ferreira Girardi – Secretary

UNGA Team – University

Giovanna Massinelli – Chair
Isabela Leal Almeida Bracalente – Vice-Chair
Livia Magalhães Diógenes dos Anjos – Secretary

Senior Secretariat of FAMUN 2026

Vitória de Salvi Gallo de Camargo – Secretary-General of FAMUN 2026
Emmanuelle Rodrigues Murer – President of the General Assembly
Ian Augusto Miola – Under-Secretary-General for Management

INTRODUCTION: YOUTH, DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION

Emmanuelle Rodrigues Murer
Ian Augusto Miola
Vitória de Salvi Gallo de Camargo

Advisors:

Professors Patrícia Capelini Borelli and Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN). Its 193 Member States are represented in the UNGA on the principle of sovereign equality, whereby each state has one vote in decision-making on the various issues under negotiation (United Nations, 2007, p. 10–11; 2026b). Given the variety and complexity of the matters discussed, the UNGA's work is divided among six thematic committees⁴. The First Committee (1C) addresses issues related to disarmament and nuclear disarmament, among other topics relevant to international peace, seeking, through cooperation, to overcome challenges and threats affecting the international community (United Nations, 2026a).

Discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation have a long history at the UN, as they directly relate to one of its core pillars: the promotion of international peace and security. This subject was the focus of the UNGA's first resolution in 1946, titled "Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy," which aimed to adopt measures to address the dangers associated with the use of atomic energy for weaponry. In 1959, through Resolution 1378, the UNGA officially included the item "General and Complete Disarmament" in its agenda for discussion by the First Committee. With the goal of achieving complete disarmament, this item also addresses non-proliferation issues and remains part of the organization's annual agenda to this day (United Nations General Assembly, 1946; 1959; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018, p. 129–130). Negotiations

⁴ First Committee: Disarmament and International Security; Second Committee: Economic and Financial; Third Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural; Fourth Committee: Special Political and Decolonization; Fifth Committee: Administrative and Budgetary; Sixth Committee: Legal (United Nations, 2026c).

regarding the "General and Complete Disarmament" agenda item in the First Committee (1C) cover all types of weaponry, divided into two categories: weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, and biological, which threaten human integrity by their very existence, and conventional weapons, which encompass all armaments other than weapons of mass destruction. This process has yielded the key international treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation currently in force, summarized in the table on the following page (Gillis, 2017; United Nations, 2026b).

Historically, the 1C has contributed to the advancement of international law regarding disarmament and non-proliferation. Nevertheless, challenges persist, particularly in the 21st century, marked by deteriorating international security and the emergence of new conflicts and novel technological applications in weaponry. Against this backdrop, UN Secretary-General António Guterres published the report *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* in 2018, aiming to place disarmament and non-proliferation back at the heart of the UN's work (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018, p. vii).

The report reaffirms disarmament as the cornerstone of the collective security system established at the UN's inception, designed "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" (United Nations, 2007), and underscores its role in promoting sustainable development. Notably, however, the document recognizes youth as a strategic actor in implementing and promoting disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, serving as a mobilizing force to catalyze change at local, national, and international levels⁵ (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018, p. 6–7).

⁵ The UN began to view young people as strategic actors regarding issues of international peace and security, specifically in 2015, with UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2250, titled "Youth, Peace and Security" (United Nations Security Council, 2015). This perspective was reinforced by a 2018 report, which notably highlighted the need to include youth in the realm of high-level decision-making on disarmament.

Table 1: Key treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation

Type of weaponry	Treaty	Definition
Weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical, and biological	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – NPT (1968)	Considered the main pillar of the nuclear regime, as it recognizes the five nuclear-armed states and commits them to negotiating disarmament in good faith. It seeks to curb the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons and ensures the peaceful use of nuclear energy
	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – TPNW (2017)	Advances the NPT by prohibiting any step related to the development and use of nuclear weapons. It obliges states to provide assistance to people who are victims of the use or testing of nuclear weapons, as well as to deal with environmental problems related to them
	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty – CTBT (1996)	As a follow-up to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), the CTBT prohibits any nuclear test-related explosion. It has not yet entered into force, as it awaits ratification by key states
	Chemical Weapons Convention – CWC (1993)	Prohibits the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and determines the destruction of arsenals, subject to verification by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
	Biological Weapons Convention – BWC (1972)	The first treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, prohibiting biological and toxin weapons
Conventional arms	Arms Trade Treaty – ATT (2013)	The first global treaty to establish standards regulating the international trade of conventional arms

	Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons – CCW (1980)	Restricts or prohibits conventional weapons considered excessively cruel or having indiscriminate effects (examples: incendiary weapons, blinding lasers, among others)
	Ottawa Convention – Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (1997)	It prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel mines, having effectively halted the global trade in this type of mine
	Convention on Cluster Munitions – CCM (2008)	It prohibits cluster munitions and requires the destruction of declared stockpiles

Source: Own elaboration based on Gillis, 2017.

The report also called on the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to create a platform to engage, train, and empower young people, particularly to enable them to act as agents of change through knowledge sharing. The platform would also facilitate access to information and tools, foster collaboration, and provide support for initiatives in disarmament and non-proliferation education. The Youth4Disarmament platform was established in 2019 with this objective, through a partnership between UNODA and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026).

It was in this context that the IC itself, also prompted by South Korea's representation in 2019, decided to include the sub-item "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation" on the UNGA agenda, as part of the item "General and complete disarmament." Since then, the IC has discussed this sub-item biennially and has adopted four resolutions: A/RES/74/64 in 2019; A/RES/76/45 in 2021; A/RES/78/31 in 2023; and A/RES/80/55 in 2025 (United Nations General Assembly, 2019; 2021; 2023; 2025).

To foster reflection on how the IC has addressed the topic of "Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation," this first part of the Research Guide discusses the UN's approach to youth to understand the role the organization assigns to them. It then provides an overview of how youth have been included in discussions on international peace and security. Additionally, it assesses the progress made and the barriers encountered regarding how the IC has

promoted youth inclusion in disarmament and non-proliferation debates and efforts. The second part outlines the positions of political groups active in the IC regarding this issue – Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), African Union and League of Arab States, and European Union and Others –, to assist FAMUN 2026 UNGA delegates.

The UN's engagement with the youth

The year 2015 marked a significant shift in the UN's relationship with youth. In September, the UNGA adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, established an action plan for countries to achieve sustainable development by 2030. One of the measures established was to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including youth, thereby empowering them. It also recognized the importance of new generations as agents of change, as stated in paragraph 51 of the resolution that adopted the document⁶ (United Nations General Assembly, 2015, p. 1; p. 6–7; p. 12).

In December 2015, the UNSC adopted the first resolution on "Youth, Peace and Security." This was a significant milestone, as it acknowledged not only the concern regarding the negative impacts of armed conflict on new generations but also the importance and contributions of youth to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. It is worth noting that the resolution outlined five fundamental pillars to guide the future of this agenda: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration (United Nations Security Council, 2015; Berents; Mollica, 2022).

In 2018, the SG report *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* emphasized the importance of empowering youth so they are increasingly recognized as agents of change in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, particularly because youth movements in this area are bold and encompass diverse perspectives, including those from underrepresented communities and population segments such as young women (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018, p. 67–68).

⁶ Paragraph 51: "What we are announcing today – an Agenda for global action for the next 15 years – is a charter for people and planet in the twenty-first century. Children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world" (United Nations General Assembly, 2015, p. 12).

However, barriers such as economic inequality and regional disparities hinder long-term active youth engagement. With this in mind, the report directed the UNODA to invest more in disarmament education, particularly through the Youth4Disarmament platform (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018, p. 67–68), which became part of a broader UN strategy to integrate youth into disarmament.

Youth4Disarmament was established to empower young people from diverse regions, connect them with disarmament experts, and join forces to pursue this core UN objective. Since then, it has become a bridge between education, training, and diplomacy, serving as UNODA's primary youth engagement initiative. To effectively integrate young people as agents of change in this field, the initiative organizes events and campaigns, provides online resources, and fosters numerous projects, enabling youth to understand, analyze, and influence the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026; United Nations General Assembly, 2019; 2025).

These efforts highlight the central role of education in the UN's engagement with youth, particularly in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, and align directly with SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda⁷. In this context, it is worth noting that, at South Korea's initiative and in collaboration with the UN Secretariat, the subitem "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation" was added to the agenda of the UNGA's IC. Since then, the topic has been discussed biennially; the resulting resolutions have reinforced the need to advance youth inclusion on the agenda and emphasized the importance of the Youth4Disarmament initiative (United Nations General Assembly, 2019; 2021; 2023; 2025), which will be analyzed in the following section.

⁷ Target 4.7 of SDG 4, for instance, addresses the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. The target also includes indicator 4.7.1, which specifies that education for global citizenship and sustainable development (including gender equality) must be incorporated into all levels of national education policies, school curricula, teacher training, and student assessment—elements that are essential to the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, as noted in the 2018 report (United Nations General Assembly, 2015; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2018, p. 67–69).

Between rhetoric and practice: The First Committee's resolutions on "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation"

Since 2019, the UNGA has adopted four resolutions on "Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation" (United Nations General Assembly, 2019; 2021; 2023; 2025). Despite this progress, the language used in the resolutions is predominantly declaratory: while states acknowledge young people as relevant agents in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, they do not, for instance, establish concrete mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making forums.

This is evident as early as resolutions 74/64 (2019) and 76/45 (2021), which emphasized three points in their operative paragraphs: promoting meaningful and inclusive youth participation in disarmament and non-proliferation debates through dialogue platforms, mentorships, scholarships, and internships; developing policies and programs to expand their constructive engagement in the field; and realizing the full potential of young people through education and capacity-building, with a view to fostering their sustainable entry into the disarmament sector (United Nations General Assembly, 2019; 2021).

The phrase "meaningful and inclusive participation" of youth was formulated based on two UN documents: the report *Our Common Agenda*, published by the Secretary-General in 2021, and *Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes*, published in 2023 as part of the agenda's implementation⁸ (United Nations, 2021; 2023). Both documents argue that youth participation should not be merely formal or symbolic but rather active within decision-making processes. To this end, the documents highlight the importance of young people having access to information, the ability to influence outcomes, and institutional accountability.

However, the responsibility should not rest solely on young people. Other actors and institutions must recognize youth as partners and ensure they have a place in negotiation forums and decision-making processes. In this regard, *Policy Brief 3* establishes that "meaningful" implies participation with concrete

⁸ Both documents were part of the preparatory process for the Summit of the Future, held in September 2024, which adopted the Pact for the Future, a multilateral agreement aimed at renewing international cooperation and strengthening the UN system's capacity to respond to global challenges.

impact, while "inclusive" underscores the need to reach diverse groups of young people, avoiding participation that is restricted or merely tokenistic. The document further notes that, even where formal spaces for participation exist, young people continue to have little actual influence, which highlights the need for their systematic integration into UN decision-making mechanisms (United Nations, 2023, p. 1–4). This recognition is significant because it suggests that the UN is shifting toward treating youth not merely as policy recipients but as active participants in decision-making and policy formulation, a move that aligns the topic with a more inclusive and participatory approach.

Reflecting this shift, resolution 78/31 (2023) from the IC, while maintaining the linguistic conventions of previous resolutions, advances the agenda by emphasizing the need to foster effective youth participation in multilateral debates. The document encourages states, as well as specialized agencies and regional organizations, to adopt more concrete measures to expand youth participation. It also highlights the importance of these actors deepening their relationships with youth-led organizations and encouraging engagement through grants and awards funded by voluntary contributions.

Furthermore, the resolution highlights the Youth4Disarmament platform as a venue for such engagement. Thus, actions taken from 2023 onwards signal a stronger commitment by the UNGA to youth inclusion and participation in this area. In short, 2023 marked a transition from merely acknowledging the topic to attempting to translate that recognition into institutional practice (United Nations General Assembly, 2023).

Further progress was achieved with resolution 80/55 of 2025. In it, the IC adopted stronger language regarding the need for youth participation in discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation. This was evident in the first operative paragraph, which included the adjective "effective," thereby consolidating the phrase "meaningful, inclusive, and effective youth participation" within the realm of disarmament and non-proliferation. The second operative paragraph of the same resolution also broke new ground by recommending that states, the UN, specialized agencies, and regional and sub-regional organizations expand and facilitate constructive youth engagement in disarmament and non-proliferation, including through their contributions to delegations at multilateral meetings. This paragraph explicitly recognized the possibility of young people participating directly and actively

in their countries' delegations at multilateral forums, a step beyond engagement in side events or dedicated platforms. The resolution also cited the Youth4Disarmament Forum as another venue for youth participation within the organization (United Nations General Assembly, 2025).

Despite progress in integrating young people into the topic, it remains crucial for UN Member States to do more. Few countries address the topic of disarmament and non-proliferation in relation to youth in their individual statements, which reflects – and reinforces – its status as a sub-item within the broader agenda of "General and Complete Disarmament." However, it is worth noting that statements made in 2023 and 2025 went beyond mere symbolic mentions, offering more substantive positions, particularly those from Australia, Malta, Finland, and the Republic of Korea, which linked youth participation to greater sustainability and diversity in disarmament and non-proliferation debates (Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations, 2023; Permanent Mission of Malta to the United Nations, 2023; Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, 2025; Republic of Korea, 2025).

Kiribati, in particular, presented an even more substantive position: it argued that young people are active contributors to present-day actions, called for the strengthening of initiatives such as the Youth Leaders Fund and the Youth4Disarmament Forum, and emphasized the need to specifically expand the participation of young women in these debates (Permanent Mission of Kiribati to the United Nations, 2025).

Furthermore, the speeches reinforced the importance of disarmament education, in line with SDG 4, which values education as a foundation for preparing new generations to engage with issues of peace and security. In this regard, education is not limited to formal schooling but also serves as a tool for raising awareness, building capacity, and fostering international participation. Finally, it is noteworthy that, although the topic addresses both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, it is weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons in particular, that occupy a central place in the state statements, with only occasional references to conventional, chemical, and biological weapons.

Progress and barriers: Youth in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda

The inclusion of youth in the UN's disarmament and non-proliferation agenda reflects significant institutional progress, as evidenced by initiatives such as the Youth4Disarmament platform and the UNGA's adoption of resolution 74/64. This presents a valuable opportunity to build a more participatory and effective agenda, in which young people move beyond being mere objects of policy to become recognized as active participants in decision-making and the formulation of solutions for global disarmament and non-proliferation. Nevertheless, these advances coexist with significant limitations, which will be analyzed now (United Nations General Assembly, 2019; Hazarika, 2025, p. 51).

Youth engagement with this topic occurs within a context characterized by distinct framing approaches, thereby limiting its transformative potential. This section highlights four key barriers to youth participation in disarmament and non-proliferation, as illustrated in the infographic below.

First, youth do not constitute a homogeneous group; rather, they encompass diverse demands and experiences, which complicates their representation. Second, persistent stereotypes about young people constrain and undermine the legitimacy of their participation. Third, these perceptions translate into institutional barriers that limit their effective access to decision-making processes. Finally, these limitations exist within a broader contradiction: despite progress in youth inclusion, states continue to prioritize armament agendas, while making only limited headway in disarmament and non-proliferation.

Infographic 1: Key barriers to effective youth participation in disarmament and non-proliferation debates



1,9 billion
young people
in the World



~90%
live in developing
countries

Source: Own elaboration based on United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2025.

First, youth remain a contested and difficult-to-define category, defined in various ways by institutions and often treated as a monolith, which obscures its internal heterogeneity and intersectional dimensions, such as gender, class, ethnicity, and territory. Moreover, this is the largest youth generation in history, numbering around 1.9 billion people, of whom approximately 90% live in developing countries, and a significant portion resides in nations affected by armed conflict (United Nations, 2026d).

This heterogeneity is central to the debate on disarmament and non-proliferation, as young people do not occupy a single position: while a significant number live in armed conflict zones and are exposed to violence involving conventional weapons, whether as victims, survivors, or recruits, others act as activists, researchers, and policymakers focused on arms control. Recognizing this plurality is therefore a prerequisite for ensuring that disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives address the diverse ways these issues affect young people (United Nations, 2026d).

Despite the significant demographic presence of youth and their active roles in conflict and peacebuilding contexts, stereotypes persist, shaping their

inclusion in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. Dominant representations, such as youth as victims, threats, or potential peacebuilders, directly influence the policies implemented. When viewed as victims, the institutional response tends to focus on protection; when viewed as threats, security-oriented approaches prevail. Particularly regarding small arms and light weapons (SALW), narratives linking youth to unemployment and criminality are reinforced, cementing the perception of young people as potential agents of instability. These stereotypes, including the perception that young people are disengaged, reduce their autonomy and limit their effective participation in decision-making processes (Cho, 2024, p. 276–279; Hazarika, 2025, p. 48–49).

Furthermore, there are broader structural challenges within the disarmament agenda that translate directly into barriers to meaningful youth participation. Disarmament is still widely perceived as a sphere dominated by states and political elites, which restricts access for non-state actors, including young people. Even when formal avenues for participation exist, such as observer status in processes like the Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, this inclusion often fails to translate into effective decision-making power. Young people and civil society organizations frequently occupy peripheral positions, with limited influence over negotiation outcomes. Thus, while progress has been made in formal inclusion, institutional barriers persist, hindering the translation of such participation into concrete political impact (Carew, 2022, p. 39–41).

Finally, the primary practical barrier to the disarmament agenda lies in the continued and intensifying state investment in armaments. In 2024, global military spending reached a record high of US\$ 2.7 trillion, marking the tenth consecutive year of growth with a 9.4% increase — the sharpest rise since 1988. This surge raised the share of military spending to 2.5% of global GDP and, on average, accounted for 7.1% of government expenditure, with per capita spending of US\$ 334 (Liang *et al.*, 2025).

As highlighted in the SG report *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, this scenario reveals a structural contradiction evidenced by the opportunity cost of these choices: less than 4% of global military spending (approximately US\$ 93 billion) would suffice to eradicate hunger by 2030, and just over 10% (US\$ 285 billion) would be enough to fully vaccinate every child in the world; redirecting even a

fraction of these resources would also make it possible to get children into school and strengthen primary healthcare (United Nations, 2025). Food, education, and health are precisely the areas that most immediately impact the lives of young people, making the imbalance between military spending and social investment a central issue for youth.

Despite the continuous increase in investment in weaponry, global security has not seen proportional improvements, while significant delays in achieving the SDGs are evident. This dynamic limits the political space for substantive progress on non-proliferation and reduces the impact of youth-led initiatives (Reverse The Trend, 2025).

With this in mind, FAMUN 2026 UNGA delegates are tasked with negotiating the expansion and strengthening of youth participation in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, based on the following challenges:

1. How can states ensure that young people have meaningful, inclusive, and effective participation, rather than merely a formal presence, in disarmament and non-proliferation negotiation processes?
2. How can states be pressured to address the needs of youth through investments in education, health, and employment, rather than prioritizing military spending?
3. What strategies can ensure that youth are protected from the differentiated impacts of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction within a more comprehensive and integrated security agenda?

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POSITION OF POLITICAL GROUPS

COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STATES (CELAC)

Enzo Semeghini Hernesto
Guilherme Romeu Gentil Ferreira Ramos
Isabela Leal Almeida Bracalente
Maria Eduarda Rodrigues Mazzuia
Vitória de Salvi Gallo de Camargo

Advisors:

Professors Patrícia Capelini Borelli and Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) is a political group founded in 2011 that brings together the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)⁹. Established as an alternative to forums that include developed nations, such as the United States (USA) and Canada, CELAC's primary objective is to promote political coordination and dialogue among its members, fostering consensus on issues of common interest and the articulation of joint positions in international forums, such as the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (CELAC International, 2026).

CELAC emerged from meetings among the countries participating in the Latin America and Caribbean Summits on Integration and Development. The community does not have a permanent headquarters but functions as a forum for dialogue and political coordination among its members. Decisions are made by consensus, and CELAC has succeeded in aligning common positions on issues such as nuclear disarmament and conventional arms control (CELAC International, 2026).

CELAC's tradition regarding disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation has historical roots that predate the political group's actual creation. Its foundational milestone is the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in

⁹ The 33 member states of CELAC are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela (CELAC International, 2026).

Latin America and the Caribbean – the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco –, which established the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area. Today, all 33 states comprising CELAC are parties to the treaty and have thus committed to prohibiting the development, possession, production, use, and testing of nuclear weapons within their territories (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026). Regarding nuclear testing, all countries in the community have also signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), reflecting the coordination among Latin American and Caribbean nations on this issue. It is worth noting that this region has the highest number of countries committed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, 2026).

Political coordination is also evident in the group's stance on other weapons of mass destruction. In 2023, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines delivered a statement on behalf of CELAC at the UNGA IC, noting that the complete elimination of chemical and biological weapons is a priority for the group's member countries regarding disarmament and non-proliferation. It underscored the importance of universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), as well as the full implementation of both instruments by their States Parties. Regarding the BWC, the group further emphasized the need to strengthen international cooperation to advance toward an agreement on verification mechanisms for biological weapons production (United Nations General Assembly, 2023a).

However, CELAC countries are severely affected by armed violence. In the same IC statement, CELAC noted that the illegal manufacture, sale, and smuggling of conventional weapons cause serious problems for the population and threaten regional peace and security. A major risk is the diversion of these weapons to non-state groups, such as organized crime factions operating across various countries. In light of this, CELAC supports the Arms Trade Treaty, which seeks to regulate the international sale of arms, and reaffirms its commitment to the UN program established to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (United Nations General Assembly, 2023a).

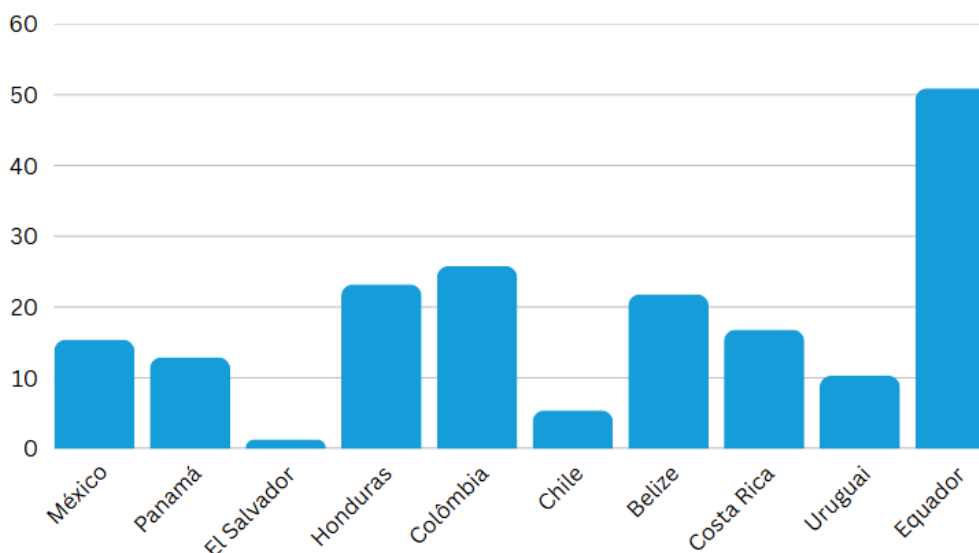
Arms control is a significant concern for the region, as countries, and, more specifically, their populations, suffer daily from issues related to small arms

and light weapons. The region has the highest global homicide rate for children and adolescents, approximately four times the world average. Data from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) indicate that 45% of victims of stray bullets are under the age of 18 and that three adolescents are killed every hour (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2023, p. 4).

Firearm-related homicide disproportionately affects young people, with young men aged 15 to 29 being the most affected group. The relationship between this specific group and organized crime and firearms is a factor that must be considered, as young men often view guns positively, associating them with the symbolic value of power, ostentation, and a sense of belonging (Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 12; p. 60).

Young women are also significantly affected by firearms. Femicide rates are high, making the region one of the most dangerous in the world for women; it is home to 14 of the 25 countries with the highest rates of this type of crime (Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 1–2).

Graph 1: Homicide rate in CELAC countries in 2025 (number of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants)

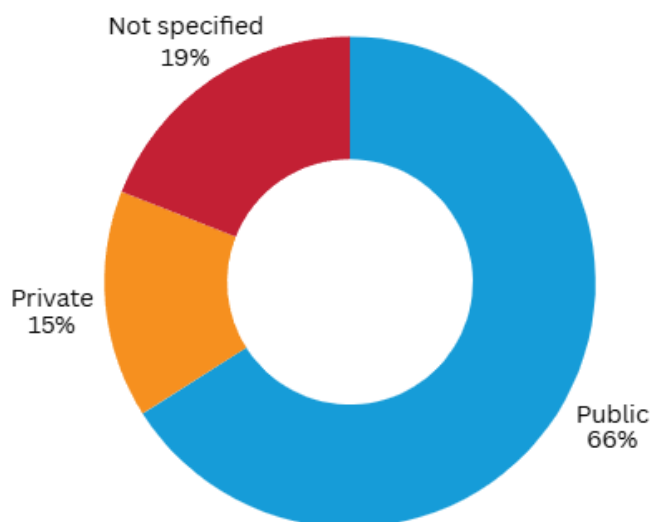


Source: Own elaboration based on Newton *et al.*, 2026.

Violence not only raises mortality rates but also compromises life trajectories and future prospects. Education is one of the areas affected by insecurity linked to the carrying of weapons, and the presence of firearms in schools has become a recurring concern in the region (Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 11–12).

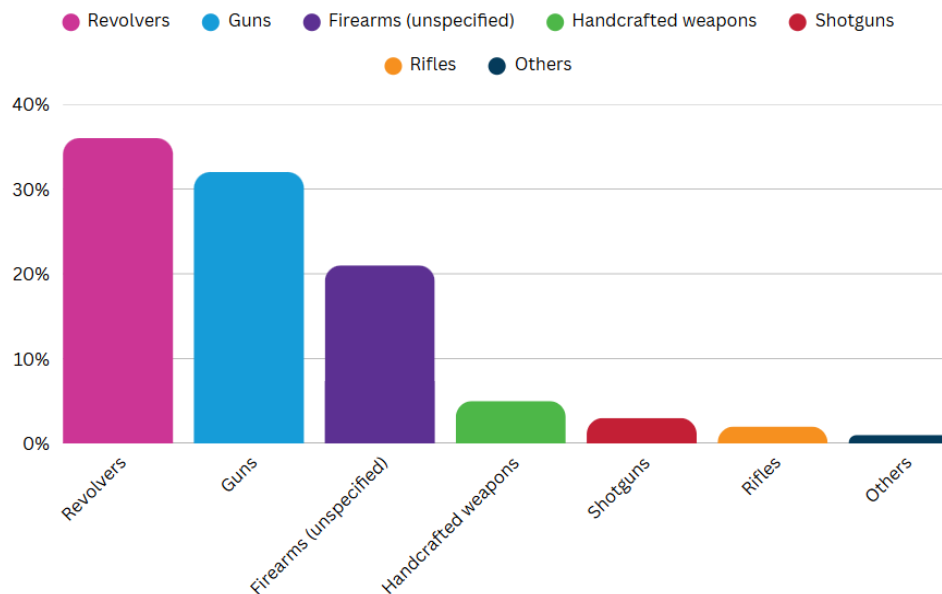
Between 2010 and 2019, 122 cases involving the presence and use of weapons in schools were recorded across Latin American and Caribbean countries. Estimates suggest that the actual incidence may be significantly higher, as some cases may be unreported or undetected. Such episodes are concentrated primarily in public schools (see the graph below), highlighting unequal exposure to violence among young people from different social groups. This context of constant violence, in turn, breeds fear and compromises both the learning process and the holistic development of students (Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 13; p. 24; p. 31).

Graph 2: Distribution of incidents involving firearms in schools in CELAC countries by educational management (2010–2019)



Source: Own elaboration based on Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 43.

Graph 3: Types of weapons found and/or used in schools in CELAC (2010–2019)



Source: Own elaboration based on Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 53.

Data from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean show that firearms are also associated with forms of violence other than homicide. Weapons are used in the commission of other crimes and illicit activities, such as drug, arms, and human trafficking, the illegal recruitment of migrants, money laundering, and illegal mining, as well as extortion and kidnapping (United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2025, p. 2; International Crisis Group, 2023).

The presence of criminal organizations or groups in communities facilitates the circulation of and access to firearms, increasing youth exposure to violent contexts, whether as victims, witnesses, or participants in these dynamics. This involvement begins early, as schools and spaces frequented by young people have become environments conducive to recruitment by criminal groups (Centro Regional das Nações Unidas pela Paz, Desarmamento e Desenvolvimento na América Latina e Caribe, 2020, p. 12; p. 60; p. 68). This exposure to armed violence should be understood as an expression of socioeconomic inequalities, wealth concentration, and lack of opportunities for children, adolescents, and young people in the region, especially those

from low-income backgrounds. Given the lack of opportunities in education, culture, and sports, living conditions, especially economically, are compromised. Therefore, organized crime appears as an alternative (Coalición contra la vinculación de niños, niñas y jóvenes al conflicto armado en Colombia, 2021, p. 12-13).

Thus, the problem of firearms should not be addressed solely based on mortality rates. The recurrent exposure of children and adolescents to environments and episodes involving firearms produces equally severe long-term effects: prolonged exposure to armed violence compromises child development, potentially affecting the functioning of the nervous and immune systems, as well as generating social and emotional instability that will be felt throughout youth and adulthood. Children who experience these contexts tend to become adolescents and adults with psychological issues that impact academic performance, personal relationships, and mental health throughout their lives (Gregson, 2024, p. 9).

This may have implications for the deterioration of living conditions and the environment, for human rights challenges, and for the prospects of Latin American and Caribbean youth. The presence of armed violence in daily life not only compromises safety but also limits young people's capacity for political and social participation, which, in turn, hinders their effective involvement in debates on disarmament and non-proliferation (United Nations Children's Fund, 2023, p. 4; Gregson, 2024, p. 9).

Given that CELAC's youth are deeply affected by both direct exposure to violence and firearms and direct involvement in organized crime and other illicit activities, it is necessary to expand state action and societal engagement. Through initiatives focused on awareness-raising, protection, and inclusion, young people can be brought into disarmament efforts and contribute innovative ideas and solutions to the region's challenges.

Despite the profound impact of conventional weapons on the youth of CELAC member countries, few states in the region actively engage in discussions regarding the sub-item "Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation" within the UNGA IC. Of the group's 33 member countries, only Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama responded to the Secretary-General's report with their views on the subject between 2023 and 2025 (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b; 2025).

Colombia has shown that its Constitution, in Article 45, guarantees young people the right to participate in public and private bodies responsible for the protection, education, and progress of youth, thereby promoting their active participation and formally recognizing their importance as agents of change. Colombia also has a “Youth for Peace” program, which aims to reduce inequality between youth from different social classes through access to education, sport and culture, preventing young people from becoming victims of violence and exposure to firearms. The country also has the “Social Service for Peace” initiative, which offers eleven activities as alternatives to military service. Part of the activities include actions that contribute to building peace, such as working with victims of armed conflicts to promote their human rights; supporting and enforcing peace agreements; and promoting public policies for peace, reconciliation, coexistence, and non-stigmatization (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b).

In the case of Honduras, its contribution was more direct in the area of conventional weapons, as the state enacted a set of laws to strengthen regulation of firearms, explosives, ammunition, and similar items, thereby intensifying control over them and the private security sector. Honduras also pledged to promote efforts to curb illicit arms trafficking and reduce armed violence, such as participating in meetings addressing the security concerns of Central American Integration System member states, who aim to approve a plan to prevent the illicit proliferation and trafficking of arms and ammunition and to discuss related challenges (United Nations General Assembly, 2025). Furthermore, the State reported providing training to Armed Forces personnel on youth, non-proliferation, and disarmament to comply with resolution 76/45 (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b).

Although conventional weapons pose a more recurring problem, CELAC countries are also concerned about weapons of mass destruction, as they represent a threat to all of humanity. Since 2014, for instance, Mexico has offered a summer program on this topic for young diplomats, aligned with the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the non-proliferation studies of the James Martin Center; over 350 young people have participated in the program to date. Furthermore, since 2022, Mexico’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations has included youth delegates in IC discussions on disarmament, ensuring their active participation (United Nations General Assembly, 2025). Panama, for its part, prioritizes youth engagement in discussions regarding disarmament and the

non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction at both global and regional levels. To this end, the country advocates that initiatives aimed at the universalization of international treaties and conventions mandatorily include mechanisms to ensure youth participation (United Nations General Assembly, 2025).

However, few countries addressed the issue of youth in the speeches delivered at the IC. As a sub-item under "General and Complete Disarmament," most CELAC countries focused their remarks on other aspects of the topic. An exception was Chile, which highlighted the importance of raising awareness and educating young people about disarmament and international security to cultivate future leaders committed to world peace, while emphasizing the role of educational institutions and civil society in this dissemination (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b).

Thus, the efforts undertaken by states are evident, whether regarding conventional weapons, as seen in the examples of Colombia and Honduras, or weapons of mass destruction, as illustrated by Mexico and Panama. Nevertheless, it is alarming that few CELAC countries actively participate in this UN discussion by proposing concrete measures for youth involvement in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, particularly given that the region's youth are significantly affected by firearms.

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NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)

Ana Carolina Galvão Martins
Giovanna Massinelli
Mariana Rodrigues Antunes
Renato Magalhães Rosa

Advisors:

Professors Patrícia Capelini Borelli and Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a political coalition with roots in the 1955 Bandung Conference, which brought together 29 newly independent states from Asia and Africa to discuss peace, independence, and the autonomy to pursue their own development agendas. Amid the Cold War, "non-alignment" represented a strategic refusal by these states to align with the polarized economic blocs led by the United States (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The NAM was officially established in 1961 with its first summit in Belgrade (Non-Aligned Movement, 2026). Currently, the NAM comprises 120 Member States from various regions, including Latin America, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East, which reflects its broad representation in the International System¹⁰ (Non-Aligned Movement Disarmament Database, 2020).

The Movement's core principles include the defense of sovereignty, the self-determination of peoples, and non-interference by external powers. The NAM's non-alignment is characterized by a political stance favoring state autonomy, non-interference, and sovereignty, while demanding a more just global order. Regarding disarmament and non-proliferation, the NAM has acted since its inception as a diplomatic front calling for the reduction of nuclear arsenals held by nuclear-armed states and advocating for the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones (Non-Aligned Movement, 2026).

In recent years, the NAM has increasingly voiced concern over the erosion of multilateralism, rising military spending, and the risks that weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear ones, pose to global peace. In a 2025 address

¹⁰ At FAMUN 2026, the majority of NAM countries will be from the Asia-Pacific region, given that this region is less represented in the other political groups within the UNGA simulations.

to the IC, the group called for renewed efforts to break the deadlock on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. It also urged developed nations to cut military spending and redirect those resources toward promoting sustainable development, specifically through international cooperation and official development assistance, with the aim of eradicating poverty and eliminating diseases (Delegation of the Republic of Uganda, 2025, p. 2).

Although NAM countries share similar concerns regarding disarmament and non-proliferation, the realities faced by their youth populations vary widely. The challenges confronting young people vary with each state's geopolitical context, socioeconomic conditions, and history of conflict. In this regard, we can identify three interconnected areas of challenge for youth across the NAM, focusing on the Asia-Pacific region and on both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons:

1. The impact of radiation linked to the history of nuclear testing in regions of Central Asia and Oceania;
2. Exposure to various types of conventional weaponry in states experiencing conflict, particularly in parts of Southeast Asia;
3. The threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction, amidst rising tension between powers near the region.

Recognizing these distinct challenges is essential for disarmament and arms control strategies, whether nuclear or conventional, to move away from standardized solutions and instead address local specificities. Regarding the first challenge, several cases stand out. In Kazakhstan, the 456 Soviet nuclear tests in the Semei region left a legacy that continues to affect the youth, who face high rates of thyroid cancer, leukemia, and congenital deformities. They also encounter social exclusion in the labor market and barriers to adequate medical care due to the stigmatization of affected populations, as well as a breakdown of trust in the state, which initially denied the harm caused by the tests (Kairoida, 2025, p. 1; Zaridze *et al.*, 1994, p. 471–475).

In Kiribati, British and USA nuclear tests conducted on the island between 1957 and 1962 exposed the population to radiation. To this day, young people inherit chronic illnesses and see their traditional agricultural and fishing activities rendered unviable by soil and water contamination, which restricts access to

employment and education (Mussabalinova, 2023; Tolebay *et al.*, 2016, p. 335–341; Exaras, 2025).

Meanwhile, in the Marshall Islands, 67 USA nuclear tests, including Castle Bravo in 1954, contaminated atolls such as Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, and Utirik. This led to forced displacement and the severing of community ties, creating generational effects that impact today's youth and compromise their mental and physical health. In this regard, it is noteworthy that young pregnant women continue to pass on cesium-137 and strontium-90 to their children, a situation exacerbated by inadequate compensation and exclusionary bureaucracy (United Nations, 2012; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012; Topping *et al.*, 2019, p. 15414–15415). In August 2024, young activists from Kazakhstan, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands gathered in Astana to demand financial compensation, environmental monitoring, and guarantees against the resurgence of new nuclear threats (Satubaldina, 2024).

Regarding the challenge posed by conventional weapons, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific notes that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region is driven by factors such as porous borders that facilitate illicit arms trafficking, the presence of criminal networks, and active armed conflicts. South and Southeast Asia constantly grapple with the impacts of organized crime, terrorism, and insurgencies. Conversely, while large-scale arms smuggling is less common in the Pacific Islands, nations such as Fiji and the Solomon Islands also face socioeconomic instability stemming from the misuse of these weapons (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026c).

Youth leaders in the region point out that the new generation is demanding greater state transparency regarding military spending, questioning the prioritization of weaponry over investments in sustainable development, investments that would yield direct benefits for young people. Youth are also calling for greater inclusion in security debates, recognizing that the active participation of young people and civil society is an essential, practical mechanism for fostering the stability required for sustainable development (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026b).

Graph 1: Comparison between total state military spending and needs that could be met with that amount (in billions of dollars)



Source: Own elaboration based on United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026b.

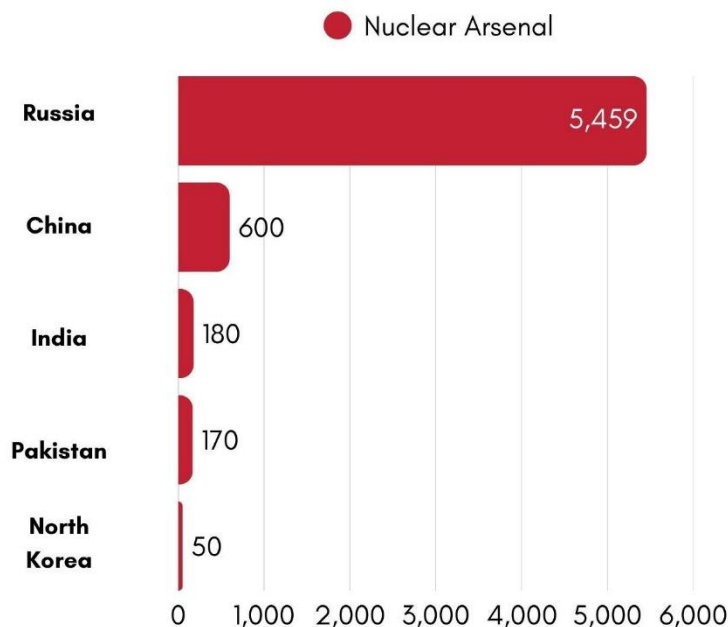
A youth art exhibition titled "Envisioning a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World" was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from April 27 to May 8, 2026. Organized by the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the exhibition highlighted the concerns of the region's youth regarding disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The artworks created by young people express anxiety about the environmental, human, and intergenerational consequences of nuclear testing in the Pacific and of Japan, led by the USA at the end of World War II, while also demanding greater transparency and accountability from governments regarding their defense policies (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026a).

It is evident from the participants' statements at the art exhibition that the new generation refuses to accept the false dichotomy between militarized security and development. To bring about this transformation, young people demand the opening of formal spaces for representation and active participation in decision-making processes, making it clear that, while negotiation rooms often exclude them, it is their lives and futures that are directly at stake in

discussions on international security (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026a).

The debate on nuclear disarmament is extremely sensitive for Asia-Pacific countries that are part of the NAM, as most nuclear-armed states are located in this region: Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea (The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, 2026). All these countries boycotted the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor, 2026), a move that ran counter to the demands and concerns of the region's youth.

Graph 2: Nuclear arsenal of NAM Member or Observer States which possess nuclear weapons (in military warheads)



Source: The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, 2026.

In this regard, it is worth noting that few NAM countries explicitly mention youth in their statements to the IC on disarmament and non-proliferation. Nepal is an exception. During the 2023 General Debate, the Nepalese delegation acknowledged that youth, alongside women and civil society, act as catalysts for driving change in disarmament efforts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Similarly, India and Kazakhstan have presented initiatives aimed at youth capacity-building, such as training programs and fellowships in disarmament

and international security (Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, 2025; President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

Kiribati also emphasized the need to empower and amplify the voices of youth as partners in promoting peace and disarmament (Permanent Representative of Kiribati at the United Nations, 2025). The Maldives, on the other hand, does not mention terms such as “youth” or “young people” in the analyzed documents, suggesting that the issue has not yet been mainstreamed across the region’s islands (United Nations General Assembly, 2023d, p. 19).

Speaking on behalf of ASEAN, Singapore highlighted its work toward a culture of peace by strengthening and supporting youth-related agendas and recognizing the importance of greater engagement among states, civil society, the private sector, and academia. However, youth is not a topic that appears in the country's individual statements (United Nations General Assembly, 2023d, p. 22). Azerbaijan, for its part, shaped by a history of conflict, addresses the issue of youth in the context of their easy access to weapons used for illicit purposes (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, 2023).

Few Asia-Pacific countries belonging to the NAM submitted responses to the SG reports on “Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation”: only India and Kiribati. India highlighted the Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship initiative, aimed at the technical and educational training of young people in critical areas such as the control of weapons of mass destruction, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies. The initiative seeks to facilitate the constructive participation of new generations in negotiations regarding these issues (United Nations General Assembly, 2023d; 2025).

Kiribati’s position is more emphatic in highlighting the urgency of educating and empowering new generations to confront existential threats in the region, arguing that disarmament education enables young people from affected communities to understand the importance of key treaties, such as the TPNW and the NPT, and to share their own personal accounts. In practice, the country actively co-organizes global events alongside Kazakhstan and civil society, uniting Pacific activists to raise their voices against the devastating legacy of over 300 regional nuclear tests and to debate the implementation of victim assistance and environmental remediation measures. This entire strategy is

guided by an intersectional perspective, with Kiribati warning that the overlap between the impacts of nuclear weapons and the climate crisis poses the greatest contemporary threat to the survival and security of the Pacific (United Nations General Assembly, 2023d; 2025).

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AFRICAN UNION AND LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

Caique Colombo Pavan
Gabriel Caetano
Giovanna Novaes Caldeira
Sofia Campos Ariceto

Advisors:

Professors Patrícia Capelini Borelli and Rúbia Marcussi Pontes

The African Union (AU) is an international organization founded in 2002, comprising 55 Member States, with the objective of promoting unity among African states, as well as peace and security on the continent and the defense of sovereignty and territorial integrity (African Union, 2026). Its members represent approximately 28.5% of the United Nations (UN) Member States. Consequently, the AU seeks to coordinate common positions on the wide range of topics discussed within the UN (Tieku, 2020). The League of Arab States (LAS), in turn, was founded in 1945 as a mechanism for regional coordination and currently has 22 Member States. Its initial objective was to defend the sovereignty of Arab states in the context of the end of World War II and the region's decolonization (Wichhart, 2019, p. 8–9). The group now seeks to strengthen relations and deepen cooperation among its members, particularly regarding economic, cultural, and social welfare issues (Masters; Sergie, 2023).

Regarding disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, the African continent is a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. The 1996 Treaty of Pelindaba prohibits the development, research, and production of nuclear weapons on the African continent and promotes general and complete disarmament as well as nuclear non-proliferation (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026; African Union, 1996). As for small arms and light weapons, the AU recognizes the severity of their trafficking and illicit circulation across the continent. The 2000 Bamako Declaration reaffirms African states' commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation of these weapons, with the aim of promoting peace, security, and stability on the continent (African Union, 2000, p. 3–5).

Regarding the Middle East, it is important to note that a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone has never materialized, despite a project to establish one dating back to 1974 (Fahmy, 2022, p. 104). The Secretary-General's report on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East reiterated the need for it and further emphasized that it should encompass all weapons of mass destruction — namely, chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons (United Nations General Assembly, 2018, p. 8). Concerning small arms and light weapons, the LAS, drawing on the UN Programme of Action, recognizes the importance and necessity of combating the illicit arms trade, given the rise in illegal stockpiles and their catastrophic impacts on the region (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2024, p. 2).

It is worth noting that youth currently constitute the majority of the population in the Member States of the LAS and the AU. In the Arab region, people under the age of 30 represent 60% of the population; there were an estimated 71 million young people aged 15 to 24 in 2015, a figure projected to exceed 92 million by 2030, with the youth population aged 15 to 29 estimated at 110 million. Meanwhile, on the African continent, young people under 35 account for 900 million people out of a total population of 1.2 billion (United Nations Population Fund, 2024, p. 10; African Union, 2020, p. 27). Given this significant demographic weight and the generation's exposure to the dynamics of violence and insecurity, the youth agenda has become a priority for both groups, prompting the launch of the Youth for Peace Africa Programme (African Union, 2020, p. 27) and the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security 2023–2028 (United Nations Population Fund, 2024, p. 4). These initiatives identify the challenges faced by youth as central themes. On the African continent, key challenges include armed conflict, violent extremism, and arms trafficking. In the Arab region, the proliferation of weapons, forced displacement, and recurring violence stand out.

Across the African continent, young people face various security challenges that vary by region. In Central and East Africa, civil wars, grave human rights violations, and rising violent extremism have triggered massive waves of forced displacement and fueled the trafficking of arms, drugs, and people (African Union, 2020, p. 3). In North Africa, transnational terrorism and the instability following the Arab Spring have deepened the economic and social exclusion of youth. Furthermore, unemployment is a stark reality for young Africans, making them even more vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups (African Union, 2020, p. 3).

In the Arab region, young people live in a reality marked by violence and insecurity. Approximately 30% of the Arab population lives in conflict zones, and youth are disproportionately affected, both as combatants and as victims of arbitrary detention, forced displacement, and gender-based violence. Furthermore, young people in Arab countries are directly impacted by violent extremism, drug trafficking, and organized crime, and they are most often victims rather than perpetrators of these dynamics, a situation that erodes social trust and exacerbates the forced displacement of this generation (United Nations Population Fund, 2024, p. 11).

Young people in these regions are heavily affected by violence, insecurity, and unemployment. In Africa, approximately 121 million young people aged 15 to 35 were unemployed or classified as NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) in 2025 (Chigudu, 2025). Similarly, the youth unemployment rate in the Arab region reached 28% in 2023, the highest in the world, with 33.2% of young people neither employed nor in education or vocational training (International Labour Organization, 2024, p. 1–2; p. 8–9).

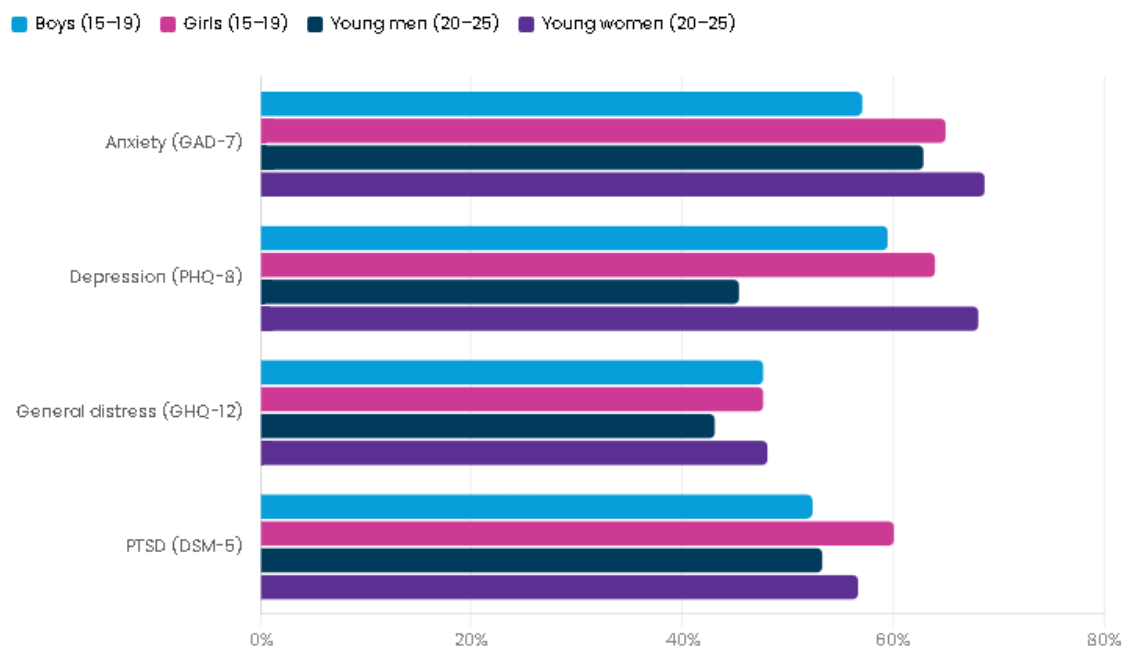
As a result, many young people turn to criminal organizations or armed groups, whether out of economic necessity or due to a lack of other alternatives. It is estimated that 25% of African voluntary recruits cited a lack of employment as the primary motivation for joining extremist groups, and that 40% stated they were in urgent need of income at the time of recruitment (United Nations Development Programme, 2023, p. 73–74).

In the Arab context, the situation of Palestinian youth stands out, as they represent 39% (approximately 2.1 million people) of the population in the Palestinian territories, which include the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Although Palestine is an emblematic case, it is not an isolated one: many young people in other Arab League countries face situations similarly marked by prolonged armed conflict, forced displacement, and the collapse of basic services, highlighting that the vulnerability experienced by youth is a structural phenomenon in the Arab region (United Nations Population Fund, 2025).

In Gaza, the situation is critical: 98% of young people have been displaced multiple times since the attacks of October 2023, and approximately 60% have exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder due to the war (United

Nations Population Fund, 2025). According to the following graph, the psychological effects of the conflict are evident but unevenly distributed: girls aged 15–19 and women aged 20–25 exhibit consistently higher rates of anxiety, depression, general distress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than their male counterparts. This highlights how war exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities and subjects young women to overlapping vulnerabilities, such as domestic violence, pressure for early marriage, and mobility restrictions, that amplify trauma and diminish their future prospects (AbuHamad *et al.*, 2024, p. 10–12).

Graph 1: Mental health indicators among youth in Gaza, by sex and age group (2024)



Source: Own elaboration on IA Claude Sonnet 4,6, with data from AbuHamad *et al.*, 2024, p. 10–12.

Furthermore, over 90% of schools were damaged, disrupting education and increasing youth unemployment. Faced with this scenario, many young people come to view migration as their only alternative. Without adequate support, these young people risk becoming a “lost generation”, marked by trauma, interrupted education, and a lack of prospects (United Nations Population Fund, 2025). Consequently, the inclusion of youth, especially women and girls, in disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives becomes essential. A generation growing up under the direct impact of war faces

various consequences and does not choose this reality, as it is imposed upon them by a lack of alternatives and the failure of the structures meant to protect them. Any disarmament agenda that ignores them fails not only as a security policy but also as a societal project, for lasting peace is only possible if built with them, rather than merely for them.

Although young people are severely affected by violence and war across the African continent and the Middle East, an analysis of statements made by AU members in the First Committee (IC) reveals that this group is rarely mentioned. The LAS recognizes the priority of meaningful participation by youth leaders in disarmament and peace strategies, involving them not only in decision-making processes but also in planning, implementation, and monitoring (United Nations Population Fund, 2024, p. 27). In its statement to the IC, Jordan, speaking on behalf of the League of Arab States, highlighted the importance of establishing a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East and reiterated the group's support for preventing terrorist groups from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (United Nations, 2023a, p. 15–16).

In the Secretary-General's 2023 report on the subject, Côte d'Ivoire highlighted its national programs and policies to combat youth participation in armed conflicts and terrorist groups. These policies aim to reintegrate these young people into society through measures such as the voluntary surrender of weapons and the payment of an 800,000 CFA franc allowance, to facilitate the reinsertion of former combatants into the national economy and to promote a culture of peace, security, and democracy. The state also implements school-based programs that seek to empower youth and foster their participation in society and security issues (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b, p. 7–8).

Such initiatives align directly with the objectives of the AU's Youth for Peace Africa Programme, which identifies violent extremism, arms trafficking, and economic exclusion as key factors of vulnerability among the continent's youth, and advocates precisely for socioeconomic reintegration and youth empowerment as central peacebuilding strategies (African Union, 2020, p. 27). In this regard, Ivorian policies can be viewed as a national expression of the regional commitments established within the AU framework.

In its response to the Secretary-General, Qatar highlighted the work of the National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons, which holds annual

workshops for young students to promote education on disarmament and non-proliferation (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b, p. 12–13). The state also maintains a Youth Committee that serves as an advisory body to the Ministry of Sports and Youth, with the mandate to promote the group's priorities and foster youth leadership in conflict resolution (United Nations Population Fund, 2024, p. 42). These Qatari initiatives align with the priorities set out in the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security 2023–2028, which emphasizes meaningful youth participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of peace and disarmament agendas (United Nations Population Fund, 2024, p. 27).

Thus, albeit not exhaustively, it is possible to identify that the most recurring strategies in the analyzed documents fall into two broad categories: education and awareness-raising regarding disarmament and non-proliferation, both in African and Arab examples, and institutional participation and reintegration, which appear in a more structured manner in the Ivorian and Qatari cases, respectively. Strategies such as the technical capacity-building of youth leaders, their inclusion in the planning and monitoring processes of peace agendas, and the systematic prevention of violent extremism among unemployed youth or those NEET, while provided for in the regional frameworks of the AU and the LAS, rarely emerge in official statements within the IC or in responses to the SG (United Nations General Assembly, 2023b; 2025).

This pattern highlights not only the disconnect between decision-makers and youth but also a structural gap between formally undertaken regional commitments, such as the Youth for Peace Africa Programme and the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security 2023–2028, and their effective translation into coordinated positions and policies within the multilateral sphere.

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EUROPEAN UNION AND OTHERS

Gabriel Ferreira Girardi
Livia Magalhaes Diogenes dos Anjos
Maria Laura Chicaroni Pinto
Rafael Andreetta

**Advisors: Professors Patrícia Capelini Borelli and Rúbia Marcussi
Pontes**

The European Union (EU), formally established in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty, is a political and economic bloc comprising 27 Member States¹¹ that coordinates its actions across various areas, including foreign policy and international security (European Union, 2026). Within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the EU participates through joint statements during the First Committee's (1C) General Debate. It is worth noting that, in addition to these statements, its members also express their views on their respective national capacities. The Others are countries that, while not part of the EU, share similar positions on the topic of "Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation" in the 1C, such as the cases of South Korea, Canada, and Japan, despite their distinct security contexts¹² (Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, 2025; United Nations General Assembly, 2023; 2025).

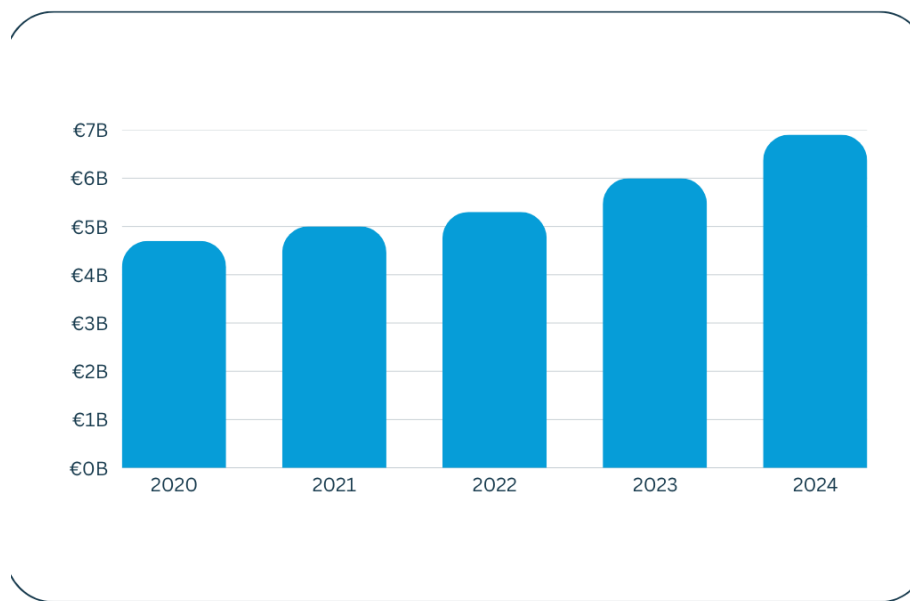
Broadly speaking, the EU advocates nuclear non-proliferation, emphasizing multilateral instruments, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, 2025). However, significant internal differences persist among its members. On one hand, countries such as Germany and Ireland tend to emphasize agendas focused on progressive disarmament and the limitation of nuclear arsenals (Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to

¹¹ Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Sweden (European Union, 2026).

¹² That is why these countries will be simulated in the FAMUN 2026 UNGA. Other countries, such as the United States and China, although present in the analyzed documents, are not included in this selection because their positions on the topic do not align with those of the EU.

the United Nations, 2025; Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, 2025). On the other hand, France maintains nuclear deterrence as a central element of its national security policy and has even increased its spending in recent years, as shown in the following graph (Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, 2025).

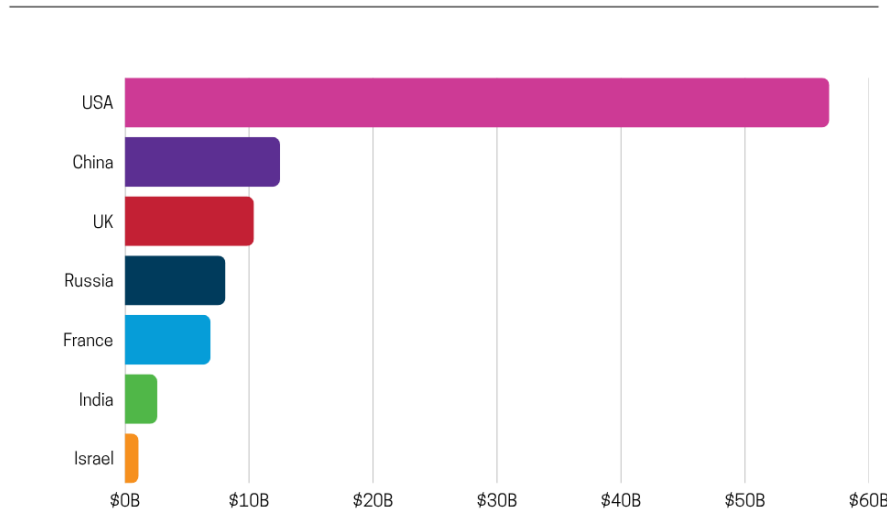
Graph 1: French spending on nuclear weapons (2020–2024)
(in billions of euros)



Source: Own elaboration based on ICAN France, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2025.

This takes place in a context of advancing militarization across EU Member States, a process marked by steadily rising investments in security and defense, as shown in the graph on the following page – a trend that is a source of concern for European youth (European Union, 2026; Galan, 2025).

**Chart 2: Countries that invested the most in nuclear weapons in 2024
(in billions of dollars)**



Source: Own elaboration based on Galan, 2025.

Among the Others, an intermediate position is observed: Japan and South Korea advocate for non-proliferation but remain bound by security agreements with the United States, such as the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security (Japan-US) and the Mutual Defense Treaty (South Korea-US) (Valdez, 2023).

For a long time, the debate regarding the need for disarmament and non-proliferation was influenced by the devastating effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki¹³, Japan, in August 1945 (Escobar, 2025, p. 5). The lives of young people who survived the bombings were deeply marked by the consequences of nuclear weapons: beyond the physical impacts of radiation, many carried psychological trauma for decades, living with recurring memories of the destruction, the deaths of family members, and a constant fear of developing future illnesses. *Hibakusha*¹⁴ also faced social discrimination and difficulties with employment, marriage, and social

¹³ Hiroshima and Nagasaki are Japanese cities struck by atomic bombs dropped by the United States on August 6 and 9, 1945. The attacks caused approximately 140,000 deaths in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki by the end of 1945, many resulting from radiation exposure (Reuters, 2025).

¹⁴ Hibakusha are the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who were affected by the explosions and radiation.

relationships due to the stigma associated with radiation (Ohta *et al.*, 2000, p. 1–5; Shimizutani; Yamada, 2021, p. 2–8).

Given this grave past, it is crucial to discuss how young people currently relate to this agenda. Data indicates that most young people in Japan believe the primary threat to the country's security over the next five years will be the impact of conflicts in neighboring regions. They also advocate prioritizing security policies to ensure domestic economic and social stability, while upholding the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles", which entail not possessing, producing, or allowing the entry of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory, as essential to maintaining peace (Nippon, 2023).

Among other nations, South Korea exhibits a significant generational divide regarding nuclear armament. Older generations, shaped by memories of the Korean War (1950–1953) and a constant perception of the threat of a North Korean invasion, tend to view nuclear weapons as indispensable tools for national defense. In contrast, young South Koreans show greater resistance to nuclearization, favoring diplomatic solutions and viewing nuclear weapons as counterproductive to the country's security and international presence (Kim, 2025).

Although young people in the EU and Others do not explicitly reject nuclear weapons, this generation tends to prioritize agendas focused on social welfare and stability, such as healthcare, education, and employment, over military priorities. This trend aligns with the previously noted aversion to nuclear risk: just as young Japanese people are guided by the Three Non-Nuclear Principles and young South Koreans tend to favor diplomacy over armament (Kim, 2025), young Europeans also show resistance to military escalation, even while acknowledging threats to regional security (European Union, 2026).

In this regard, a survey conducted during the European Year of Youth indicated that preserving peace, strengthening international security, and promoting international cooperation are among the central expectations of younger generations regarding the EU. Luxembourg, Estonia, Latvia, and Sweden stand out among the countries that most emphasized this expectation: their results reveal a particularly high valuation of the EU's role as a guarantor of peace and security (European Union, 2026; Galan, 2025). Although European youth look to the EU to act as a pillar of the international order, reinforcing its historic commitment to cooperation and conflict prevention (European Commission,

2022), they also hold other priorities, such as education and health, highlighting a tension between their own priorities and the strategic choices made by their governments.

This trend is also increasingly apparent among youth elsewhere. An example of youth concerns and mobilization in this area occurred at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) in 2018, when students and researchers launched an international boycott after a partnership with Hanwha Systems to develop artificial intelligence for autonomous weapons—the so-called “killer robots”. Academic pressure led the institution to adopt guidelines pledging not to produce lethal technologies, demonstrating the capacity of young people to influence security and technology agendas (Pax, 2020, p. 13).

Regarding conventional weapons, the EU and youth are increasingly concerned about their humanitarian impacts and the need for control and regulation. There is an emphasis on the importance of international instruments to regulate the arms trade and prevent their illicit circulation, especially in conflict contexts (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2026). Furthermore, the group highlights the need for greater transparency and responsibility in the use and transfer of these weapons to reduce their impact on civilian populations (Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, 2025).

This approach, which combines international security and commitments to multilateral norms, proves to be relevant when analyzed in light of the concrete impacts of these weapons at the European domestic level, as the impacts on youth manifest themselves mainly through recurrent exposure to non-lethal armed violence, responsible for more than 90% of incidents recorded in countries such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden. Project INSIGHT studies indicate that the main victims of this type of violence are young people, often under 30 years of age. Although the European average firearm homicide rate remains relatively low, at around 0.3 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021, the social and psychological effects of the circulation of weapons are broad and affect the feeling of safety in neighborhoods, public spaces and young people’s living environments. Cases recorded in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands demonstrate that shootings on public roads, nightclubs and residential areas often expose young people and even children to armed violence (Krüsselmann, 2023).

Finally, EU and Others constitute a group that seeks to engage and empower young people so that they can lead and reaffirm their countries' commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda at the UN. To this end, these countries generally promote educational programs and exchanges to empower young people and include them in decision-making spaces on the topic. South Korea and Japan stand out in this agenda by including initiatives aimed at youth in their national security policies, in addition to others in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), such as the first Youth4Disarmament Forum¹⁵ held at UN headquarters, in 2025, and the Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons, with support from Japan (United Nations General Assembly, 2023; 2025).

It is also worth highlighting the case of Canada, which, during its presidency of the Conference for Disarmament in 2021, held the first-ever plenary discussion on youth and disarmament, effectively including young people (United Nations General Assembly, 2023; 2025).

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¹⁵ The Forum brought together 26 young leaders from 24 states to discuss international peace and security in relation to emerging technologies and nuclear weapon systems. The Forum issued a final document with recommendations for the UN General Assembly, cementing youth's role as an active and fundamental force in discussions on the subject (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2025).

[york/eu-statement-%E2%80%93-un-general-assembly-1st-committee-nuclear-weapons-1_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-%E2%80%93-un-general-assembly-1st-committee-nuclear-weapons-1_en). Accessed 06 June 2026.

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PART 2:

UNITED NATIONS YOUTH COUNCIL

YOUTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

PREFACE TO PART 2

Dear delegate,

We are delighted to have you in the Youth Council of the FACAMP Model United Nations 2026 (FAMUN 2026). We are thrilled that you have accepted the challenge of joining this simulation and, in doing so, are taking action to help us find solutions for our future. This will be a time of great learning and personal growth. We want you to know that we are at your disposal, from the preparation phase through to the simulation itself, to ensure you have the best possible experience during the conference!

Based on the premise that peace begins with youth and their participation in decision-making processes, we, from the FAMUN 2026 Youth Council team, invite you to think, discuss, and develop actions that rethink how we stand up for our human rights. Extreme weather events are becoming increasingly frequent, directly affecting the lives of millions of people. A response that guarantees our right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment requires us to rethink the way we live on this planet.

FAMUN is the ideal setting to reflect on these issues that demand immediate action. Through this process, the conference is an opportunity for you, as a future professional, to explore new perspectives and negotiate differences to drive change. Our voice and our importance in local and international decisions must be safeguarded today, and that is why we invite you to act now!

The first step in preparing for FAMUN is to familiarize yourself with the simulation topic: “Youth and Human Rights”. To this end, we have prepared this research guide to direct your studies on promoting the human rights of youth, focusing on two sub-topics that will shape our resolution negotiations: “Human right of youth to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment” and “Human right of youth to participate in global decision-making processes on the climate crisis”.

In the first pages of this guide, you will find an introduction about the importance of the Youth Council and the key challenges to be addressed

during the simulation. After that, we outline the positions of the regional groups participating in the negotiations – Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Europe and Others – to guide you on formulating your negotiation strategy for FAMUN.

Faced with the challenges posed by this theme, we invite you to reflect on your own human rights and reconsider how we engage with them, with the aim of defining actions that foster a truly dignified future and promote harmony between youth and the environment. This process should be undertaken collaboratively with other delegations. We hope that through dialogue, diplomacy, and consensus, we can find innovative solutions regarding youth participation in defending and protecting our human rights, empowering young people to drive change and act as true agents of transformation.

Sincerely,

UNYC 1 Team – High School

Julia Beatriz de Oliveira Castro – President
Rafael José Zenaro – Vice-President
Giovanni Ferreira Alves – Secretary

UNYC 2 Team – High School

Kauê Vítor Panta – President
Beatriz Fornazari Spoto Corrêa – Vice-President
Gabriel Silva de Oliveira – Secretary

UNYC 3 Team – High School

Letícia Pereira Malaman – President
Heitor Torres Neves – Vice-President
Elisa Soares Bueno – Secretary

UNYC 4 Team – High School

Anna Luíza de Souza Pádua – President
Lorena Pansani Andrioli – Vice-President
Sofia Baptista Kneubil – Secretary

Senior Secretariat of FAMUN 2026

Victor Benvegnú Araújo – Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly
Affairs and Conference Management

Carolina Barbosa Torres – Under-Secretary-General for Global
Communications

Mateus Tobias Ferreira – Assistant Secretary-General for Management

Mariana Pera de Almeida – Assistant Secretary-General for Global
Communications

INTRODUCTION: YOUTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Carolina Barbosa Torres
Mariana Pera de Almeida
Mateus Antônio Tobias Ferreira
Victor Benvegnú Araújo

Advisors:

Professors Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi and Roberta Silva Machado

Within the context of the United Nations (UN), the discussion on youth and human rights has gained significance given the ambiguous position of young people in the international system: while they are among the groups most affected by structural vulnerabilities, such as unemployment, precarious employment, social inequalities, and the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis, they also possess an increasing capacity for political mobilization (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018 b, p. 3-4). Accordingly, this research guide examines the evolution and consolidation of the youth and human rights agenda at the UN, focusing on two central themes: the recognition of the human rights of youth to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and the expansion of their participation in global decision-making processes on the climate crisis.

According to the UN, the definition of youth is not restricted to a rigid age bracket. Although the 15–24 age range is traditionally used for statistical purposes, there is no single, consistent definition of what it means to be young – a term that varies according to institutional and sociopolitical contexts. From a substantive perspective, youth should be understood as a fluid and heterogeneous social category, defined by a specific position within economic, political, and institutional structures. Being young can mean a transitional phase from adult dependency to autonomy, the pace of which varies across different spheres of social life, such as education, the labor market, and health. In this sense, the analytical relevance of youth within the field of human rights lies in the fact that this status shapes specific patterns of vulnerability and access to rights, making young people subjects with their own distinct demands (United Nations, 2026 b; United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018 b, p. 4).

It is based on this understanding that the incorporation of youth into the international human rights regime has evolved as a relatively recent phenomenon within the UN system that has consolidated especially since the 2000s. Although initiatives aimed at youth inclusion have existed since the 1990s, it is only in the last two decades that the UN has begun to more systematically structure its efforts to integrate youth into the human rights agenda. This movement entails, in particular, expanding the recognition and protection of young people's civil, political, economic, and social rights, as well as promoting their participation in decision-making processes. This process is unfolding against the backdrop of the largest youth generation in history – approximately 1.2 billion people¹⁶ – and a growing awareness that contemporary global challenges, such as the climate crisis, inequality, and conflict, disproportionately affect young people. At the same time, diverse youth populations worldwide are demanding their active participation in formulating local and global solutions (United Nations, 2018; United Nations, 2026 c).

Thus, young people do not hold a distinct set of rights but rather face specific restrictions in the exercise of universally recognized rights. Foremost among these is the right to political participation, often limited by under-representation in formal institutions and by legal barriers, such as minimum age requirements for running for public office, that curtail their influence on decision-making processes. Meanwhile, the right to decent work is undermined by high youth unemployment rates and the fact that young people are predominantly employed in precarious, informal jobs lacking social protection (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2026).

Added to these restrictions is the environmental dimension, given that young people are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, particularly in more vulnerable countries and communities. Thus, the effects of the environmental and climate crisis compromise the exercise of fundamental rights, such as health, food, housing, and education, while youth's participation in environmental and climate

¹⁶ UN projections indicate that the youth population aged 15 to 24 represents approximately 16% of the global population, with an estimated increase to around 1.3 billion people by 2030 (United Nations, 2026 a). However, under broader approaches, such as that of Youth 2030, which considers the 10–24 age group (often referred to as “young people”), this figure is estimated at around 1.8 billion, concentrated primarily in developing countries (United Nations, 2018; United Nations, 2026 a).

decision-making processes remains limited (United Nations General Assembly, 2018). These barriers are exacerbated by intersectional factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, and geographic location, highlighting that the main challenge lies both in the need to guarantee human rights for young people and the persistence of structural obstacles that hinder their full exercise (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 1–2).

Given these limitations, the adoption of Youth 2030 – The United Nations Youth Strategy – in 2018 represented an attempt by the UN system to provide an institutional response to the gaps in the realization of the human rights of youth. By establishing an integrated strategic framework, the initiative shifts the focus from a paternalistic logic to a rights-based approach, recognizing young people not merely as beneficiaries but as rights-holders and central agents in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies (United Nations, 2018). In this regard, the Strategy structures its actions around pillars that directly address previously identified challenges, such as political participation, access to decent work, education, health, and justice, and emphasizes the need to remove the institutional and socioeconomic barriers that limit the full exercise of these rights.

Furthermore, by incorporating dimensions such as peace, resilience, and sustainable development, the Youth 2030 strategy situates the climate issue within the realm of human rights, recognizing that the impacts of environmental degradation disproportionately affect young people and that their meaningful participation is a necessary condition for creating effective and inclusive global responses (United Nations, 2018).

In this regard, the resolutions on “Youth and human rights” adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) established, starting in 2016, a normative framework aimed at recognizing the specific nature of the youth experience. Resolution A/HRC/RES/32/1 (2016), the first on the subject, establishes as starting point the recognition of the central role young people play in promoting sustainable development, peace, and human rights, while simultaneously identifying the particular challenges that limit the full enjoyment of their rights, emphasizing the need for their empowerment through political participation and human rights education (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016).

In subsequent developments, the focus of the HRC shifted toward a more precise identification of the structural barriers affecting youth, particularly regarding political participation and socioeconomic inclusion, as evidenced by persistent high levels of youth unemployment, poverty, and institutional under-representation, as well as the incidence of discrimination based on age and other social markers (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019 a).

This assessment has been broadened to incorporate new challenges, such as the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, inequalities in access to digital space, and, increasingly, the centrality of climate change, while acknowledging both the vulnerability of young people and their active role in mobilization and decision-making processes. Therefore, there has been an evolution from an agenda centered on recognition and inclusion toward a more complex approach that links human rights, participation, and the climate crisis as interdependent dimensions (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2022). In this context, recognition is now given not only to the disproportionate vulnerability of young people to the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change but also to their active role in promoting and defending rights, particularly through transnational mobilizations and advocacy¹⁷ initiatives (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023).

Consequently, the integration of environmental issues into the human rights agenda by the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment marks a significant turning point. This right is understood as a guarantee that all people can live in environmental conditions that enable a life of dignity and well-being. It is a right with a dual dimension, linking the protection of human dignity to the preservation of the ecological systems upon which life depends. This paradigm shift consolidates the understanding that environmental degradation is not merely a matter of resource management but a direct violation of fundamental rights, given that pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate instability impede the full exercise of rights such as the right to life, health, and food (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights et al., 2023, p. 4-6).

¹⁷ Advocacy refers to the set of actions and strategies employed by individuals or groups to influence decision-making processes, public policies, and institutional agendas, with the aim of promoting specific rights, interests, or causes (Morgado; Gozetto, 2019, p. 6-7).

Although there is no single definition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, it is a complex right, comprising both substantive and procedural elements. Its substantive elements include vital components such as clean air, a safe and stable climate, access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, access to healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments, and thriving biodiversity with healthy ecosystems. The procedural elements refer to the tools that enable the exercise of this right, such as access to information on environmental and climate issues, the right to participate in decision-making processes, and access to justice, effective remedies, and redress (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights et al., 2023, p. 9).

In this context, the path toward consolidating the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment gained momentum with resolution A/HRC/RES/48/13, adopted by the HRC in 2021, which formally recognized the interdependence between environmental quality and the protection of human dignity. The Council established that the protection of the environment and ecosystems is vital for human well-being, highlighting that environmental damage, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, directly interferes with the enjoyment of human rights and disproportionately affects vulnerable populations (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2021).

The following year, the topic was elevated to the level of global consensus through UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution A/RES/76/300, which reiterated the position of the HRC and consolidated access to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a universal human right. This transition represents a move beyond the mere “greening”¹⁸ of pre-existing rights, establishing the environment as an autonomous value and a common good of humanity. By elevating the issue to its most representative body, the UN not only reinforced the legitimacy of this right but also called upon States, international organizations, and businesses to intensify cooperation and the implementation of public policies ensuring sustainability for present and future generations (United Nations General Assembly, 2022 a; Cima, 2022, p. 39–40).

¹⁸ The term refers to the interpretation of existing human rights to offer protection against environmental harm. Instead of creating a new right, established civil and political rights are “greened” through the argument that environmental degradation impedes the full exercise of those rights (Cima, 2022, p. 39).

The paradoxical position of youth in this debate is noteworthy, given that the climate crisis acts as a risk multiplier that directly threatens young people's transition to adulthood and their enjoyment of fundamental substantive rights. The impacts of the triple planetary crisis – climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution – are already evident, and it is young people and future generations who will bear the greatest burden of these consequences. Environmental degradation compromises the human right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, while also violating basic rights such as access to clean water, food, housing, and education (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights et al., 2023, p. 4–6; United Nations Human Rights Council, 2021).

However, this reality is marked by profound heterogeneity: the climate crisis does not affect all young people equally, disproportionately exacerbating human rights violations based on markers of gender, race, ethnicity, and region (United Nations, 2020, p. 7–9). Young women and girls, for instance, face heightened risks of violence and barriers to accessing resources, while young people in least developed countries and Small Island States suffer from institutional fragility and the existential threat to their territories (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights et al., 2023, p. 9). To mitigate these impacts, it is imperative to ensure the full exercise of human rights by guaranteeing that young people have access to transparent scientific information to combat misinformation and engage in genuine, rather than merely symbolic, participation in decision-making processes (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018 b, p. 8–9).

Faced with this scenario of vulnerability due to the climate crisis and systematic human rights violations, global youth do not position themselves as passive victims of the crisis. Instead, they emerge as protagonists in local and global mobilizations that have radically transformed the debate on climate action. Contemporary youth climate activism manifests in three main modalities: dutiful dissent, characterized by institutional participation in conferences and formal consultations; disruptive dissent, expressed through school strikes, mass demonstrations, and non-violent civil disobedience; and dangerous dissent, which challenges established power structures and often results in the criminalization of activists (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 3–5). Far from being mutually exclusive, these forms of mobilization strategically complement one another: while young people negotiate in the corridors of the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on climate change, millions take to the

streets worldwide to demand climate justice, and young environmental defenders face threats while protecting territories on the front lines of ecological destruction.

The effectiveness of this youth activism is demonstrated by movements such as Fridays for Future (FFF), led by young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, which have succeeded in significantly altering public perception regarding the climate emergency. FFF not only influenced electoral agendas in various countries but also pressured governments to declare climate emergencies and set more ambitious carbon neutrality targets (Han; Ahn, 2020, p. 6–8). An equally significant example emerged from the Global South with the organization Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC), founded in 2019 by law students from the University of the South Pacific in Vanuatu. The initiative spearheaded a campaign that, under the diplomatic leadership of the Vanuatu government, led the UNGA to adopt Resolution A/RES/77/276 by consensus in 2023. In this resolution, the UNGA requested an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding State obligations in respect of climate change. The opinion, issued in July 2025, recognized that States have a legal duty to prevent climate-related harm and to protect the human rights of present and future generations, demonstrating that youth mobilization in the Global South is capable of producing concrete effects on international law (Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, 2026).

However, the transformative capacity of this activism faces a critical structural limit: young people mobilize, protest, and propose ideas, yet remain systematically excluded from the formal spaces where binding decisions on climate policy are actually made (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 10–11). This exclusion not only represses the potential of youth mobilization but also constitutes a violation of the right to participation, an essential component of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Thus, the youth climate struggle demonstrates that the substantive guarantee of this right depends crucially on the realization of the right to meaningful participation in climate decision-making processes (Han; Ahn, 2020, p. 9–10; Knox, 2020, p. 82–83).

The formal presence of young people in decision-making spaces does not, in itself, guarantee substantive participation. At climate COPs, young people

frequently encounter the phenomenon of tokenism¹⁹, referring to the superficial inclusion of individuals from underrepresented groups (such as youth) in institutional spaces without actually granting them the power to influence decisions or outcomes (Kanter, 1977). YOUNGO (the Youth Constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC) serves as the primary mechanism for youth participation at COPs. It is responsible for systematically denouncing structural barriers that limit young people's access to negotiation spaces, such as restricted speaking times and the disregard of their proposals in final declarations²⁰, as well as the perpetuation of power asymmetries that transform political actors into rhetorical tools for pre-defined agendas (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 7–8; Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC, 2026).

This reality stands in stark contrast to the recognition, by both the HRC and the UNGA, of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, as well as to the obligations of States to ensure the right of young people to participate in decision-making processes on the climate crisis (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018 a, p. 8–10). In response to these gaps, the Pact for the Future, adopted by the UNGA in September 2024, marked a significant step forward by recommending, as part of its actions, the creation of the Core Principles for Meaningful Youth Participation, published in March 2026. These

¹⁹ The concept of tokenism emerged in the United States during the 1960s amidst the struggle for African American civil rights. Martin Luther King was the first to use the term in an article published in 1962. It was later further developed by Harvard sociologist and professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter in the book *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), based on her study of women's presence in large corporations. Kanter observed that when members of an underrepresented group enter a space dominated by another group in very small numbers, they are treated as symbols of their category, or tokens, rather than as individuals with actual influence over decision-making. The concept was subsequently applied to analyze the merely formal inclusion of other groups, such as young people, within institutional settings (Kanter, 1977; Radi, 2019).

²⁰ The process of establishing the UN Youth Office illustrates this institutional commitment. Proposed in the report *Our Common Agenda* (United Nations, 2021, p. 4) and established by resolution A/RES/76/306 of 8 September 2022, the Office represents the first entity within the UN Secretariat dedicated exclusively to youth affairs. Funded by the regular budget, the Office is mandated to promote youth participation across the three dimensions of the organization's work: (i) peace and security; (ii) human rights; and (iii) sustainable development (United Nations General Assembly, 2022 b; United Nations Youth Office, 2026 a). In practical terms, the Office has facilitated the participation of youth delegates in intergovernmental processes, developed capacity-building programs on UN advocacy mechanisms for youth organizations, and established channels for systematic consultation between the UN system and global youth networks.

eleven principles establish concrete standards for youth participation in UN decision-making processes and are summarized in the table below.

Table 1: Core Principles for Meaningful Youth Participation

Principle	Determinants of meaningful participation
1. Rights-based and anchored in UN instruments	All participation must be grounded in respect for, protection of, and the realization of young people's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, anchored in the UN Charter, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Accessibility and inclusion for all young people	Ensure equitable access for all young people, physically, digitally, linguistically, and financially, including through reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and by facilitating efficient visa and accreditation processes.
3. Diversity and representativeness	Guarantee balanced and inclusive participation that reflects geographic diversity, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalized and historically underrepresented groups through transparent selection processes.
4. Safety, safeguarding and protection	Ensure that participation is voluntary and takes place in a safe environment, with protocols to prevent retaliation and confidential reporting mechanisms tailored to young people.
5. Co-governance with safeguards for independence	Integrate youth participation in a structured manner into agenda-setting, policy formulation, negotiations, implementation, and evaluation, while preserving the autonomy and integrity of youth organizations and initiatives.
6. Clarity of roles, mandates and scope	Establish delegation procedures and protocols that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of young people before, during, and after intergovernmental processes.
7. Resourcing and enabling costs	Allocate sufficient, dedicated resources to cover travel, visa, and per diem costs. The resources must be distributed equitably and, where appropriate, stipends

	should be provided to compensate the time and expertise of young people.
8. Capacity building for youth and duty bearers	Empower young people to develop the skills needed for meaningful participation, and equip duty-bearers to engage and support them in these spaces.
9. Transparent information	Disseminate, in a timely and accessible manner, information regarding modes of participation, timelines, and points of influence before, during, and after intergovernmental processes.
10. Feedback, accountability and follow-up	Provide transparent feedback on how youth contributions were considered and reflected in outcomes, while maintaining a public record of commitments made by States whenever possible.
11. Intergenerational collaboration and respectful conduct	Foster structured, respectful interactions between decision-makers and young people, building trust, solidarity, mutual learning, and continuity.

Source: Own elaboration based on United Nations, 2026 c, p. 5–6.

Applying these principles to climate decision-making processes is what distinguishes genuine youth participation from mere tokenism. In practice, this means opening the doors of official negotiations to young people, rather than simply inviting them to side events held on the margins of actual decision-making. It also means ensuring that a lack of financial resources does not prevent young people from developing countries from attending COPs, and that proposals submitted by YOUNGO are effectively read, considered, and addressed by negotiators. Finally, it means establishing permanent channels of dialogue between States and youth organizations during the very formulation of national positions, that is, before decisions have already been made.

Besides, as emphasized by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment in the report *What is the Right to a Healthy Environment?* (2016), States have an obligation to facilitate and encourage public participation in environmental decision-making processes, specifically including the participation of groups disproportionately affected by environmental harm, such as young people (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019 b, p. 12). Youth participation in climate decisions is, therefore, not a matter of political courtesy but a legal obligation for States under international human rights law.

The fulfillment of this right also requires combating the growing phenomenon of the criminalization of young environmental defenders and ensuring that civic spaces remain open for youth climate activism (Global Witness, 2019). Global youth climate movements have been instrumental in pressuring governments to adopt more ambitious targets for reducing emissions. Silencing these voices through repression simultaneously violates the right to participation and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (Han; Ahn, 2020, p. 4).

Therefore, the human right of young people to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and their right to meaningful participation in decision-making processes on the climate crisis constitute inseparable sides of the same coin: the protection of youth's fundamental human rights before the greatest existential threat of our era. The formal recognition of these rights by the international community, embodied in UNGA Resolution 76/300 (2022) and the 2026 Principles for Meaningful Youth Representation, represents an undeniable normative achievement (United Nations General Assembly, 2022 a; United Nations, 2026 b). However, the substantive realization of these rights remains hindered by structural barriers that perpetuate tokenism, silence young voices, and reproduce power asymmetries in the spaces where binding decisions regarding the climate future are made.

Overcoming this contradiction between formal recognition and practical exclusion is not merely a matter of democratic improvement or public policy efficiency: it is a question of intergenerational justice and of States fulfilling their legal obligations under international human rights law. Young people do not seek privileges, but claim rights; they do not ask for concessions, but demand justice. Ensuring their effective and meaningful participation in COPs and other multilateral forums on climate is simultaneously a condition for the democratic legitimacy of climate decisions and a requirement for their practical effectiveness and the protection of the human rights of present and future generations.

Therefore, the FAMUN 2026 UN Youth Council proposes a futuristic simulation in which NGOs represented by young people from around the world will discuss the topic "Youth and Human Rights". In this context, delegates will debate not as Member States, but as representatives of a youth movement asserting its rights and proposing actions and solutions to guarantee the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, as well as to

expand meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes on the climate crisis. It will be up to the youth representatives, thus, to propose solutions and actions grounded in the inextricable link between human rights and the climate crisis, a link long neglected by States.

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POSITION OF REGIONAL GROUPS

AFRICA

Giovanni Ferreira Alves

Heitor Torres Neves

Letícia Pereira Malaman

Advisor: Professor Roberta Silva Machado

The African continent has the youngest population in the world, with over 400 million people aged 15 to 35. The African Youth Charter aims to protect the human rights of the youth and ensure their effective participation in society. The Youth Decade Plan of Action outlines five priority areas, including education, employment, peace and security, sexual and reproductive health, and agriculture and climate change (African Union, 2026). Despite the importance of these regional initiatives to safeguard the human rights of African youth, young people across the continent face challenges that threaten the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

The climate crisis is one of the factors exacerbating environmental problems such as droughts, desertification, water scarcity, and armed conflicts. African countries contribute the least to climate change, yet their populations are among the most vulnerable to its impacts. Drought and desertification in Africa have intensified due to the climate crisis, causing food insecurity and hunger among the most vulnerable populations. Data from 2025 revealed that more than 52 million people were facing hunger in West and Central Africa, while in Southern Africa, 40% of the population faced food insecurity due to droughts, floods, and economic crises. Meanwhile, in the Horn of Africa and the eastern region of the continent, 85 million people were suffering from acute food insecurity (IFRC, 2025).

Another serious problem on the continent, exacerbated by the climate crisis, is water scarcity. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in 2022, 411 million people in Africa lacked access to basic drinking water services, 779 million lacked basic sanitation, and 839 million lacked access to basic personal hygiene. The climate crisis contributes to water shortages that affect millions of people across the African continent, impacting not only health and well-being but also causing food and energy insecurity (Grupo Banco Africano de Desenvolvimento, 2023).

The combination of armed conflict and the climate crisis is one of the continent's most serious problems, disproportionately affecting young people, children, and women, who make up nearly 80% of the internally displaced persons and are vulnerable to gender-based violence, human trafficking, and forced recruitment. Conflicts threaten the right to education and healthcare for young people and children, as schools and hospitals are forced to close. Furthermore, the climate crisis exacerbates those risks and exposes the most vulnerable populations to food and water shortages, intensifying competition over scarce resources such as land, water, food, and livestock (Mishra, 2025).

Thus, the climate crisis is not merely a factor that exacerbates existing problems on the African continent; it also threatens young people's human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Article 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights stipulates that "All peoples shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favorable to their development" (Organization of African Unity, 1981). Accordingly, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights affirms that States must ensure a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by supporting and monitoring the development of scientific studies on environmental issues and gathering concrete data regarding risks to human life (Cima, 2022, pp. 42–44).

The meaningful participation of African youth in global and local decision-making processes regarding the climate crisis is indispensable given their vulnerability to the climate crisis and its impact on the realization of a myriad of human rights. Such inclusion is essential for African youth to play an active role in formulating regional and international public policies to address the climate crisis. The presence of African youth in global decision-making processes has been gaining momentum, particularly at recent Conferences of the Parties (COP). Between COP26 (2021) and COP28 (2023), youth representation from the continent saw the highest growth worldwide, rising by 80% (Ofodile and Abdulkadir, 2024, p. 187). At the UN, initiatives such as the African UN Youth Delegate and Representative Program (AUNYD) bring together young people from African countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Besides, young people organize themselves through the African subgroup of YOUNGO (the Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC), the official group for children and youth within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

However, barriers still exist to African youth participation in decision-making spaces regarding the climate crisis. In this regard, Ofodile and Abdulkadir (2024, p. 183) highlight that 80% of young African delegates rely on external funding to attend international events and face difficulties in securing it, in addition to encountering rigid visa requirements for Global North countries. The authors point out a clear disparity in access to the venues where actual decisions are made: 80% of young people from Europe have access to the high-level negotiation zones at COPs, whereas only 60% of young Africans gain the same access, often remaining confined to side events and excluded from the main negotiations (Ofodile and Abdulkadir, 2024, p. 185).

Beyond logistical and financial issues, youth participation is criticized for playing a merely symbolic role, wherein young people are invited only to advisory positions without real influence over financial or programmatic decisions (The Body Shop; United Nations Office of the Secretary General Envoy on Youth, 2022, p. 12). The call for African youth participation in decision-making processes is enshrined in the African Youth Charter: Article 11 establishes the obligation of States to ensure youth participation in all spheres of society and in political decision-making bodies. Meanwhile, Article 19 of the Charter recognizes the fundamental role of youth in environmental protection and the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (African Union, 2006, pp. 6, 14–15).

Faced with this reality, African youth have been organizing collectively to demand participation that goes beyond merely consultative or symbolic roles. The work of NGOs and youth-led collective initiatives has been crucial in addressing the gaps and structural barriers left by global governance systems. In 2024, the Regional Conference of Youth (RCOY), an initiative accredited by YOUNGO, brought together young leaders from across the continent in Morocco to draft the African Regional Youth Declaration. This document consolidated the demands of African youth, which were subsequently presented at COP29 (2024) (Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa, 2025). One example of an initiative empowering the continent's youth to combat the climate crisis is the African Youth Climate Hub (2026), which trains young entrepreneurs to turn climate challenges into renewable energy solutions. The YouthADAPT initiative, a partnership between the Global Center on Adaptation and the African Development Bank, funds resilient, youth-led business models (Global Center on Adaptation, 2026). Another example is the Green Generation Initiative (2024), which highlights the

urgent need for ecosystem restoration by mobilizing volunteers to directly rehabilitate local biodiversity.

These initiatives led by young Africans seek solutions to the climate crisis, which exacerbates existing problems and poses a structural challenge to the human rights of young people. Food insecurity, water scarcity, armed conflict, and desertification threaten the basic rights of African youth, including the rights to food, water and sanitation, health, work, and development, as guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The vulnerability of African youth to the climate crisis highlights the need for their effective participation in global and local decision-making processes, particularly in coming up with solutions to combat the crisis. In the UN Youth Council discussions on "Youth and Human Rights," African NGOs must acknowledge that, despite its growth, youth participation on the continent remains largely symbolic and faces logistical and financial barriers that exclude African voices from global decision-making centers. Consequently, FAMUN delegates should propose actions to bridge this participation gap, demanding that the international community and States transform symbolic consultations into genuine decision-making power. Furthermore, inclusive climate governance is essential to ensure that African youth can take a leading role and actively build a sustainable and less unequal future for the continent.

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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Beatriz Fornazari Spoto Corrêa

Gabriel Silva de Oliveira

Kauê Vítor Panta

Advisor: Professor Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi

Young people make up nearly 25% of the total population of Latin America and the Caribbean: according to one of the few surveys on youth in the region, conducted by the UN in 2011, out of the 672 million people living there (Worldometer, 2026), approximately 156 million are young people aged 15 to 29 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2011, p. 1). Although this represents the largest youth population recorded in the region since 1980, this segment of the population remains largely invisible in statistics, a fact evidenced by the scarcity of specific data and analyses regarding the situation of young people in Latin America and the Caribbean (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024, p. 15).

One of the most prominent issues facing Latin American and Caribbean youth regarding the guarantee and realization of their human rights is inequality. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), socioeconomic inequalities constitute a fundamental barrier preventing young people in the region from exercising their rights. This is because inequality hinders young people from playing a leading role in development and peace processes by compromising their access to basic rights such as healthcare, housing, and decent work:

The inclusion of young people in development processes is essential to achieving equitable and sustainable progress. Despite advances in human development over the past decades, inequalities between different regions and socio-economic groups remain a significant barrier in many parts of the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where youth represent more than 25% of the population, it is crucial to invest in their inclusion to overcome these inequalities as they are essential agents of change to promote more just, inclusive, and peaceful societies (Freire; Benavides, 2024).

Beyond socioeconomic inequalities, it is important to consider that Latin American and Caribbean youth constitute a heterogeneous group, composed of diverse ethnic-social groups. Of particular note is the Afro-descendant youth population, comprising over 36 million young people aged 15 to 29, which represents 6% of the region's total population in 2020 (United Nations Population Fund, 2020). World Bank data show that Afro-descendant youth in Latin America are not only more exposed to violence but are also less likely to complete primary education compared to their non-Afro-descendant counterparts (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 87).

Another important group is Indigenous youth, numbering approximately 15.5 million in 2023. According to the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 9 out of 10 Indigenous children or adolescents experience some form of human rights deprivation due to prejudice and discrimination based on their ethnicity (United Nations Children's Fund, 2023).

The heterogeneity and inequality faced by young people in Latin America and the Caribbean directly impact their rights to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. From a legal standpoint, Latin America and the Caribbean pioneered the recognition of this right, particularly regarding the preservation of nature and the culture of Indigenous and traditional peoples. This leadership role was reflected primarily in the work of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which consolidated significant advances by recognizing the relationship between environmental protection and fundamental human rights in 2017 (Tigre, 2024, p. 262–263).

However, the legal advancements have not translated into the broad exercise of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, particularly for young people. One reason for this mismatch lies in the consequences of the region's dominant socioeconomic model: extractivism. The impacts of mineral extraction, energy projects, agribusiness, and fossil fuel extraction jeopardize not only the protection of the climate and ecosystems in Latin America and the Caribbean but also the prospects for safeguarding the human rights of the youth. The environmental impacts resulting from these economic activities affect the realization of basic rights, such as the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, the right to health, the right to education, and the right to adequate housing (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2017, p. 124–125, p. 135–136).

Mining activities and large-scale energy projects are responsible for various violations of the human right of Latin American and Caribbean youth to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The spillage of chemicals and contaminants into bodies of water makes them unsuitable for consumption, agriculture, and fishing, consequently leading to a deterioration in the nutritional practices of surrounding communities (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2024). These environmental impacts particularly affect young people by compromising their right to health and access to safe drinking water (Nações Unidas Brasil, 2016).

Furthermore, projects aimed at energy expansion have affected various human rights of Indigenous youth, as seen with the Belo Monte hydroelectric plant in the Xingu region of the Brazilian Amazon. The plant's construction resulted in the flooding of an area inhabited by two Indigenous communities, and their displacement was carried out without proper planning. In addition to violating Indigenous peoples' human right to their ancestral connection with the territory, the displacement led to increased violence and a deterioration of basic sanitation in the city of Altamira. According to a report of the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, Indigenous youth in the Xingu region not only saw their social vulnerability exacerbated but also faced severe restrictions on the exercise of their fundamental human rights (Nações Unidas Brasil, 2016).

Another economically significant activity in Latin America and the Caribbean is agribusiness, which has caused severe socio-environmental impacts and contributed to human rights violations affecting the region's youth. Given the vast areas utilized for this activity, where monoculture is predominantly the primary method of cultivation, the depletion of soil productivity drives the expansion of deforestation. The conversion of forests into agricultural production areas and pastures accounts for an average of 70% of deforestation in the region (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2016). Furthermore, 38% of the soil in Latin America and the Caribbean is considered unhealthy, primarily due to degradation caused by agribusiness (Vieira, 2025). These economic processes directly compromise the right of young people to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, as unsustainable agricultural practices impair environmental quality and limit youth access to dignified and sustainable living conditions (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2016).

The extraction and use of fossil fuels represent one of the most serious violations of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Beyond being finite resources, the use of fossil fuels has a massive impact on global warming, as carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere contribute to environmental degradation and affect air quality in cities. Consequently, fossil fuels are a major obstacle to limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C, as agreed upon in the Paris Agreement (Pacheco, 2023).

Given the climate impacts caused especially by fossil fuels, young people in Latin America and the Caribbean have taken on a central role in mobilizations for climate justice and a just energy transition. Data from the Ibero-American Youth Survey, conducted by the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) in 2025, indicate that environmental sustainability is among the top three personal and collective concerns of young people in the region, with percentages ranging between 80% and 85% (Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe, 2025).

One way Latin American and Caribbean youth are mobilizing is through the judicial system. An increasing number of young leaders are bringing climate litigation cases to secure the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. One example involves young leaders Dannya Estefanny Bravo and Kerly Herrera, members of the collective Warriors for the Amazon ("Guerreras por la Amazonía"). The group won a landmark lawsuit against the Ecuadorian state to end gas flaring in the Amazon, a practice that causes pollution and cancer in local communities. Since the 2021 ruling, the youth collective has continued to pressure the government to comply with the decision and has organized educational workshops in their community, demonstrating how young people can effectively occupy spaces where decisions are made (Marcos, 2026).

The context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) in Brazil in 2025 marked a pivotal moment for the mobilization of Latin American and Caribbean youth in the fight for the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America (OIJ) mapped over 170 active youth-led environmental initiatives across Latin American and Caribbean countries in preparation for COP-30, covering activities ranging from climate mitigation to ecosystem restoration and waste management (Secretaria-Geral Ibero-americana, 2025).

The aforementioned research has revealed that the civic participation of Latin American and Caribbean youth is fundamental to strengthening the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. In this regard, the inclusion of diverse youth groups from the region in decision-making processes concerning environmental and climate issues is central to ensuring true climate justice (Romero et al., 2023, p. 87). During COP-30, Nayra Kaxuyana, President of the Association of Indigenous Students at the University of Brasília (apud Sato, 2026), highlighted the importance of this participation: “If negotiations are not including the youth, children and indigenous groups, then we are not negotiating future; we are negotiating injustice”.

Despite their fundamental importance, Latin American and Caribbean youth continue to face challenges in playing a greater role in global decision-making processes regarding climate change. First, there are financial and logistical barriers. For COP-30, the cheapest subsidized rooms exceeded the UN subsistence allowance of US\$ 149.00. Furthermore, official accommodation portals only listed options costing double that allowance. These logistical and financial difficulties are not merely technical but, above all, political, as they effectively prevent youth participation in decision-making processes:

The youth were effectively getting ‘priced out’ of COP30, now feared to be “the most inaccessible COP in recent memory”. If young delegates from the most climate-affected countries cannot even afford a bed, how can they claim to have a real seat at the decision-making table? (Thangavel, 2025).

Secondly, there are bureaucratic and language barriers that limit the youth from the region from truly accessing decision-making processes at COPs. Accreditation for the so-called Blue Zone²¹ is opaque and restricted, offering limited access to youth delegations from Latin America and the Caribbean. For instance, at COP-27, held in Egypt, only one young person from the region was formally accredited for the Blue Zone: Francisco Manzanares, a young Colombian climate activist from the movement Guardians for Life (“Guardianes por la vida”) who has participated in five COPs. Although COP-30 expanded space for youth, much remains to be done to ensure meaningful

²¹ The Blue Zone is the official, restricted-access area of the climate COPs where formal diplomatic negotiations and binding decisions among countries take place. Access is limited to accredited delegations from Member States, Heads of State and Government, admitted observers, and specialized press (Coelho, 2025).

youth participation in global climate decision-making processes (Regional Climate Foundations, 2025).

Within the UN, Secretary-General António Guterres selected three activists from Latin America and the Caribbean to join his third Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change: Txai Suruí (Brazil), Kantuta Diana Conde (Bolivia), and Ashley Lashley (Barbados). The group, comprising 14 young climate leaders, aims to formulate recommendations for the Secretary-General to broaden youth perspectives and accelerate global climate ambition. The appointment of two South American representatives and one Caribbean representative was welcomed by youth NGOs in the region. According to Ashley, her mission is to “(...) carry the Caribbean’s cry for climate justice and to hold the world accountable for the debt it owes to SIDS [Small Island Developing States]” (Lashley apud United Nation, 2025).

Therefore, the actions of Latin American and Caribbean youth demonstrate that defending the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is intrinsically linked to expanding their participation in decision-making processes at national, regional, and global levels. Although several States in the region have incorporated this right into their legal frameworks, significant gaps persist between normative recognition and effective implementation, particularly given the intensifying environmental degradation caused by the extractivist socioeconomic model and its disproportionate impacts on younger generations.

In this context, civil society organizations and movements led by Latin American and Caribbean youth play a central role in pressing for greater government accountability regarding the guarantee of human rights for youth and the strengthening of mechanisms for meaningful youth participation in decision-making spaces. Far from being merely victims of the climate crisis, Latin American and Caribbean youth are asserting themselves as indispensable political actors in building a human rights-based society, demanding representation and the actual capacity to influence the decisions that will shape their future.

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ASIA-PACIFIC

Anna Luíza de Souza Padua

Lorena Pansani Andrioli

Sofia Baptista Kneubil

Advisor: Professor Roberta Silva Machado

The Asia-Pacific region is home to one of the world's largest youth populations, with over 700 million people aged 15 to 24, representing approximately 60% of the global youth population (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2025). A major challenge in the region is the impact of the climate crisis, which exacerbates existing environmental issues, such as air pollution, rising sea levels, degradation of forests, and the increased frequency of extreme weather events, which threaten the human rights of the youth, particularly their right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Air pollution is one of the major environmental challenges facing young people in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in large cities. It is estimated that approximately 70% of global deaths caused by air pollution occur in this region. In the Western Pacific alone, pollution accounts for about one-third of global deaths, with roughly 2.2 million deaths annually linked to poor air quality. The primary cause of air pollution is the burning of fossil fuels and biomass, activities directly linked to the region's dominant economic sectors, such as coal-based power generation, transportation, industrial furnaces, and unregulated waste burning. This issue is particularly acute in countries like China and India, which have large industrial sectors that remain dependent on coal and where levels of polluting particles in the air are among the highest in the world. China, for instance, records 2.3 million deaths annually associated with air pollution. Consequently, the economic development model based on fossil fuel industries directly compromises the right to health and the right to life of young populations in the Asia-Pacific (United Nations Environment Programme, 2026 b).

Furthermore, air pollution threatens the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment more broadly, as this right is an essential prerequisite for the exercise of other human rights. It is estimated that approximately 450 million children in East Asia and the Pacific are exposed to

critical levels of air pollution, a direct consequence of the high concentration of industries that rely on fossil fuels. This exposure is linked to respiratory diseases, cardiovascular problems, and impaired physical and cognitive development (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025 a). In major urban areas across the region, drinking water sources are also contaminated, further compromising the right to health of local populations (United Nations Environment Programme, 2026; United Nations Children's Fund, 2025 b).

Another significant challenge is the high incidence of natural disasters linked to the climate crisis, with the Asia-Pacific region accounting for more than one-third of such events globally. Common climate-related events include typhoons, tropical cyclones, floods, prolonged droughts, landslides, and heatwaves, frequently affecting countries such as the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia. These phenomena destroy infrastructure, housing, and schools; disrupt basic services; lead to population displacement; damage agricultural production; and hinder access to water and food, in addition to impacts on public health and the economic stability of affected communities (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Development Programme, 2023, p. 12–13).

Rising sea levels also constitute a major environmental problem facing young people in the Asia-Pacific region, directly affecting hundreds of millions of people living in low-lying coastal areas and rendering them extremely vulnerable, particularly in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as the Maldives, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands (United Nations Environment Programme, 2026; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2019). In these countries, rising sea levels have impacted entire communities, which face high costs for the transportation of goods – both imports and exports – due to vast geographical distances and territorial isolation. Additionally, the populations of these States face constant threats to their safety and continued presence in those territories, as their fundamental rights, including the rights to life, health, housing, and food security, are directly compromised (United Nations, 2026).

Other significant environmental issues in the region include deforestation and biodiversity loss. Asia-Pacific is home to some of the planet's most important rainforests, such as the Borneo rainforest and the Greater Mekong region, which have some of the world's highest levels of biological diversity. However, these areas have been suffering intense environmental degradation due to

agricultural expansion, logging, and urban growth. On the island of Borneo –shared by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei – vast forest areas have been destroyed in recent decades for palm oil production and logging, while in the Greater Mekong region, urban growth, infrastructure development, and agricultural expansion have contributed to deforestation and the fragmentation of natural habitats. In addition to increasing carbon emissions and accelerating climate change, these processes directly threaten the human rights of young people who rely on these ecosystems for their livelihoods, cultural identity, and food security, particularly indigenous and rural communities. Environmental degradation also reduces access to essential natural resources, undermines traditional ways of life, and threatens the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (World Wildlife Fund, 2026).

In this context, young people in Asia-Pacific are among the groups most affected by the impacts of climate change, as they will face these effects throughout their lives and often possess fewer resources to cope with such transformations (United Nations, 2010). The climate crisis can directly compromise new generations' rights to development, well-being, and full participation in society, as well as their access to education and development opportunities. Extreme weather events, such as cyclones and floods, can destroy schools, disrupt classes for extended periods, and hinder the commute of students and teachers, particularly in rural areas and the SIDS. Many families affected by environmental crises face economic losses, which can lead young people to drop out of school to help support their families. This severely limits the future prospects of the youth in the region, thereby compromising the development of present and future generations (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025 b; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Development Programme, 2023, p. 4-8).

Beyond environmental issues, it is important to examine the situation in key Asia-Pacific countries, such as India, China, Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia, where various factors also impact the human rights of young people. In these societies, rapid technological advancement, including artificial intelligence, has profoundly transformed educational opportunities and young people's access to information. In Japan and South Korea, for instance, technological development has expanded access to digital learning platforms, thereby strengthening youth participation in social and educational spheres (United Nations, 2023). However, in countries with

significant social inequalities, such as India and Indonesia, challenges regarding equitable internet access and digital inclusion persist, particularly among low-income populations and socially vulnerable groups, limiting the full exercise of human rights, including the right to education and access to information (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Development Programme, 2023, p. 4–8).

In this sense, the mobilization of youth in the Asia-Pacific region has become increasingly relevant to the global climate debate. Young people have spearheaded social movements and awareness campaigns focused on climate justice, seeking to pressure governments and international institutions to adopt more ambitious mitigation and adaptation policies, while also advocating for the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Accordingly, studies on youth climate activism indicate that young people have played a pivotal role in raising public awareness and driving policy changes related to the environmental crisis (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 42; Han; Ahn, 2020, p. 15–17).

Nevertheless, youth in the Asia-Pacific region face significant obstacles that restrict their right to participate in global decision-making processes regarding the climate crisis. The primary barriers to young people's effective participation are structural, political, cultural, social, and financial (United Nations Development Programme, 2025, p. 22). Often, structural and political barriers result in governments offering only a symbolic inclusion of youth in decision-making, a phenomenon known as tokenism. In this context, many young people report being invited to conferences and debates as youth representatives without their views having a significant impact on final decisions or granting them genuine decision-making power. Additionally, youth in the Asia-Pacific region cope with exclusionary governance systems with low levels of institutionalized youth participation. This means that access to decision-making spaces often relies on personal connections, leaving such access vulnerable to political shifts within national governments. Consequently, activists residing in remote or peripheral areas face greater obstacles in accessing international forums than do young people living in capital cities or urban areas (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Norms of “respectful silence” act as cultural and social barriers for many young people in the region. In various cultures, such as in parts of Mongolia and Southeast Asian countries, traditions discourage children and young

people from questioning their elders, which hinders their ability to be more assertive at negotiating tables. Furthermore, gender inequality creates additional obstacles for young women and individuals of diverse genders, including patriarchal norms, disproportionate domestic caregiving responsibilities, and the risk of gender-based violence when seeking to enter the political sphere (United Nations Children's Fund, 2025 b).

Another obstacle to youth participation is the lack of funding, as the high cost of international travel to conferences, particularly the COPs, and the scarcity of resources for local youth-led initiatives restrict their capacity for activism. Also, connectivity gaps and unstable internet infrastructure in remote Pacific communities, combined with a lack of access to technical training on climate change and international governance, hinder young people's learning and participation in decision-making spheres. Language barriers faced by Asia-Pacific youth from Indigenous communities and countries where English is not the primary language exclude them from UN processes and technical documents (Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines, 2025).

Yet, the Asia-Pacific region is home to non-governmental organizations that contribute to the empowerment and representation of young people. Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFICC) is a student-led NGO that uses international law to ensure the human rights of future generations are protected against the climate crisis (Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change, 2026). Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP), a social movement seeking to directly link the environmental crisis to the defense of the human rights of marginalized populations, mobilizes young people to demand public policies that protect the most vulnerable populations in Southeast Asia (Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines, 2026).

Therefore, young people in Asia-Pacific are at the epicenter of the climate crisis, which threatens their human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Severe environmental issues, including air pollution, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and the degradation of vital biomes, compromise not only ecosystems but also young people's fundamental rights to life, health, food, housing, and education. At FAMUN, NGOs from Asia-Pacific must propose measures to ensure a sustainable future for the region's youth, demanding that the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment be treated as an intergenerational justice priority. Additionally, UN Youth Council delegates must propose actions to eliminate barriers

preventing the region's youth from participating in decision-making spaces regarding the climate crisis.

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EUROPE AND OTHERS

Elisa Soares Bueno
Julia Beatriz de Oliveira Castro
Rafael José Zenaro

Advisor: Professor Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi

The Europe and Others regional group comprises countries with the oldest populations in the world, with a median age of around 40 years. Nevertheless, the youth population remains large and socially significant. In Europe, young people account for approximately 14.6% of the continent's total population, totaling around 109 million out of the region's 745 million inhabitants (Statista, 2025 a; 2026). Beyond Europe, other major Western nations concentrate significant youth populations. The youth population aged 15 to 24 in the United States (US) stands at 44.7 million, representing 13.2% of the total population (Statista, 2025 b). In Canada, the youth population aged 15 to 24 is 5.02 million, corresponding to 12.1% of the country's total inhabitants in 2025 (Government of Canada, 2025).

Although countries in the Europe and Others group exhibit the highest Human Development Index scores in the world, their youth populations still face growing challenges regarding the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Even though the group formally recognizes fundamental youth rights, such as access to housing, healthcare, and education, the realization of these rights is increasingly hindered by political and economic factors that undermine the climate actions of many countries in this group (Pinkeviciute, 2026).

Among the political factors is the increase in military spending, resulting from both Western Europe's reaction to the Russian military advance following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the intensification of US military offensives under the Trump administration. In 2025, the European Union (EU) increased its defense spending by 62.87% compared to 2020, equivalent to approximately 2.1% of the bloc's GDP (Conselho da Europa, 2026). Another political factor is the rise of governments that promote climate-denialist rhetoric, such as the Trump administration in the US, which withdrew the country from various climate agreements and dismantled numerous environmental protection policies, including those safeguarding rivers and lakes. Consequently, the US

has pursued policies to boost the mining, oil, and coal sectors, which are major sources of greenhouse gas emissions (Volcovici, 2025).

Regarding economic factors, the persistence of unsustainable production and consumption patterns among the population of the European and Other group intensifies pressure on the life conditions of ecosystems. According to the European Environment Agency, European consumption patterns, particularly related to housing and food, continue to critically exceed planetary boundaries, directly compromising the environmental future of coming generations (European Environment Agency, 2024). In Canada, the consumption of inexpensive products via online shopping contributes to the population exceeding nature's regenerative capacity by approximately fivefold (Divert NS, 2025). Meanwhile, the United States rank among the world's largest waste producers: despite accounting for only 4% of the global population, the country generates more than 12% of the planet's waste (Environment America, 2021).

The contradiction between the formal recognition of the human rights of young people and the weakening of climate policies has caused feelings of insecurity among youth from the Europe and Others group, affecting the realization of their right to mental health and well-being. Research involving youth groups shows that the vast majority experience fear, sadness, anger, and a sense of powerlessness in the face of the current climate crisis, a phenomenon known as ecoanxiety. Ecoanxiety is particularly prevalent in countries with higher levels of education, such as those in Western Europe (Hickman et al., 2021, p. 2). In the US, ecoanxiety affects 50% of the country's youth (United Nations Fund for Children USA, 2023, p. 3). A survey conducted by UNICEF USA (2023, p. 3–4) revealed that, among young people across 15 countries spanning the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia, 57% of respondents suffered from ecoanxiety, while 16% were active environmentalists, highlighting a gap between awareness and the capacity to take action.

The impact of ecoanxiety on the human rights of young people is particularly significant in countries within the region that rely heavily on oil and coal and have a low share of renewable sources in their energy matrixes. In Eastern Europe, countries such as Hungary and Poland have the most inadequate climate policies in Europe and rank among the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters (Tavares, 2023). These countries are also known for directly undermining human rights, particularly those of young immigrants and the LGBTQIA+ population, who face discrimination facilitated by national laws.

Meanwhile, in the US, the presence of leaders who deny climate change has led to the promotion of policies aimed at increasing oil and natural gas extraction. Consequently, the human right of youth to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is compromised, especially by poor air quality and rising average temperatures, directly affecting the physical health and well-being of this generation (Noor, 2026).

Violations of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment have concrete consequences for the health of young people: youth living in urban outskirts and industrial regions are exposed to pollutant concentrations exceeding the limits recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) (World Health Organization, 2023), a situation associated with higher rates of asthma, respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular conditions among young Europeans (European Environment Agency, 2026 a).

Extreme heatwaves, which are becoming increasingly frequent in Europe, disproportionately affect young people who lack access to climate-controlled housing, a common feature of the outskirts of European cities (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022, p. 1850). Besides, a group of young immigrants faces significant vulnerability due to their frequent exclusion from environmental protection programs implemented by European governments. Young immigrants tend to settle in areas with greater exposure to industrial zones and in peripheral neighborhoods with lower property values. Social and housing exclusion linked to their migrant status exacerbates this inequality, adding environmental vulnerability to other violations of rights already faced by this segment of the youth population (European Environment Agency, 2026 b).

In the US, approximately 5 million children have asthma, and climate change tends to increase ozone exposure, further exacerbating this condition (Environmental Protection Agency, 2023). In Canada, the 2023 wildfires generated waves of air pollution that affected the health of residents in major Canadian cities: a survey conducted that same year revealed that young Canadians were the most impacted in their daily lives by the change in air quality (Canadian Lung Association, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the climate crisis and environmental inequality constitute concrete violations of the right of young people from the Europe and Others group to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. As they are directly affected by these issues, young people have sought to increase their

participation in decision-making processes regarding climate policies, advocating for their rights and demanding more effective action from governments.

In Western Europe, the Fridays for Future movement, founded in 2018 by Greta Thunberg, expanded to dozens of countries and, in 2019, proposed a European Citizens' Initiative aimed at strengthening EU legislation to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target to limit global warming to pre-industrial levels. Although the movement failed to secure the minimum number of signatures required to trigger a discussion in the European Parliament, the initiative highlighted the engagement of young European climate activists with institutional mechanisms (Gorman, 2021, p. 27). In Eastern Europe, Dominika Lasota, a young Polish climate leader, distinguished herself by advocating for the energy transition and youth participation in environmental decision-making, meeting with the President of the European Commission in 2022 (Ghazaryan, 2025).

In the US, the law firm NGO Our Children's Trust supported the case *Juliana v. United States*, filed by 21 young people against the federal government based on their human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The case was discussed from 2015 to 2023, when the judiciary ruled in favor of the 21 youth people and mandated that the US government take more assertive climate protection measures (Our Children's Trust, 2023). In Canada, the NGO Environment Youth ("Environnement Jeunesse") filed a class-action lawsuit in 2018 on behalf of all young people under the age of 35 in Quebec, seeking to hold the government accountable for climate-related harm to future generations. Unfortunately, the Canadian court dismissed the case in 2021, but the experience strengthened youth climate activism in the country (Environnement Jeunesse, 2019).

These examples demonstrate that young people from the Europe and Others group are able to gain access to decision-making spaces, whether through the EU or via climate litigation cases. However, these spaces rely heavily on the individual and collective efforts of young people to break down political barriers. The same applies to global decision-making processes on climate change. Young people from Europe, the US, and Canada have increasingly participated in UN Climate Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to advocate for the human right of youth to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and to highlight the urgency of the climate crisis from the perspective of future generations.

In the European context, between COP1 and COP26, European youth participation in official conference spaces totaled 8,906 young people, comprising 7,492 NGO representatives and 814 national youth delegates. Organizations such as the European Youth Forum and the Federation of Young European Greens frequently participate in climate negotiations, while countries such as Finland, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, and Sweden have begun regularly including young people in their official delegations. These data demonstrate that Europe is one of the regions that has most institutionalized youth participation in global climate governance (Orsini; Kang, 2023, p. 88).

Beyond participating in the institutional mechanisms of the COPs, youth NGOs from the Europe and Others group utilize these spaces as arenas for mobilization and political coordination. On the sidelines of official government negotiations, youth NGOs advance joint statements and awareness campaigns to pressure governments and diplomats into taking more ambitious climate action. The shared agenda of these youth NGOs is grounded in human rights and climate justice, advocating for the phase-out of fossil fuels to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Besides, they argue that wealthier countries should assume differentiated climate responsibility, given their history as the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. Consequently, they pressure their own countries to make greater climate finance commitments to the Global South, such as the Loss and Damage fund (Orsini; Kang, 2023, p. 92).

Within the framework of the third Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, young people from the Europe and Others group play a pivotal role. Among the 14 young climate leaders selected by Guterres to present recommendations on global climate policies, four are European (Angela Busheska from North Macedonia; Axel Eriksson from Sweden; Marcel Bodewig from Germany; and Zuzanna Borowska from Poland) and two are from the US (Charitie Ropati from Alaska and Lena Goings from New York) (United Nations, 2026).

Against this backdrop, the agenda of youth NGOs from the Europe and Others group is ambitious, seeking to hold states accountable for guaranteeing the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Although young people in this group have greater access to climate decision-making spaces, they demand that their participation in climate negotiations move beyond the symbolic and become an effective right. They also advocate for climate

policies that incorporate principles of environmental justice, addressing the needs of historically marginalized groups, such as young immigrants, residents of the urban peripheries, and populations from Eastern Europe and the Global South. In doing so, they reaffirm that guaranteeing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment depends on recognizing meaningful youth participation, both as a fundamental right and as a prerequisite for more inclusive and effective climate governance.

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 famunfacamp

 facampfamun1

 +55 19 99422-9805

 famun@facamp.com.br

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