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## Tenth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians

# *Avoiding lost generations: Preserving education and employment in all circumstances*

Yerevan, Armenia, 12-14 September 2024

### Outcome Document

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We, 144 young parliamentarians from 52 countries, gathered in Yerevan from 12 to 14 September 2024 to reaffirm our commitment to empowering youth amidst multiple crises in the world today. Our average age was 37.3 years and 40% of us were women. We were joined by representatives of the Government of Armenia, international organizations and civil society, as well as youth leaders and advocates. We were also joined by the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, the President of the National Assembly of Armenia, the President and Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, and the President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

Ensuring quality education and employment opportunities for all is essential for building a fair and inclusive world where everyone has the chance to thrive. This is about more than just earning a paycheck; it is about conforming to socioeconomic rights, respecting human dignity and fulfilling common values. Education and employment are enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4 and SDG 8 and are at the cornerstone of the SDGs promise of leaving no one behind. Yet, without additional measures, by 2030, only one in 6 countries will achieve the SDG target for universal secondary school completion. Similarly, one in 4 young people is not in education or training, with young women more than twice as likely as young men to be in this situation.

We expressed our worry that such gaps are exacerbated in times of crisis and conflict, and called for the prioritization of education and employment opportunities for young people as core components of sustaining peace and promoting human security.

Beyond conflict, pandemics and climate change are other critical crises challenging education and employment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.5 billion children and youth worldwide were affected by school closures, and the intellectual and mental health impacts of this disruption persist even after the pandemic has subsided. Greater international cooperation, including through the forthcoming Pandemic Accord, is necessary to mitigate the negative impacts of such health emergencies. Climate change may displace over one billion people by 2050 and will drive significant populations to seek education and work abroad. This is already severely affecting education and employment in small island developing States (SIDS).

In order to ensure quality education in times of crisis, we, young MPs propose the following actions:



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- Guarantee access to education for all, including through free and compulsory education for those faced with crisis situations. This includes increased budgeting for education, the inclusion of refugees and displaced persons in national education systems supported by flexible curricula, language and mental health programmes and teacher training.
- When in-person education is not possible as a result of crisis, promote virtual and hybrid models of education. This includes ensuring adequate investment in the necessary infrastructure to bridge digital divides and allow access in remote or crisis-affected areas.
- Oversee education curricula so that they promote a culture of peace and build the skills needed to excel in the jobs of the future, including in digital technologies and the green economy.

Decent employment is also central to everyone's participation in society, contributing to self-sufficiency and a sense of identity. Employment is also key to social and economic integration, particularly for newcomers to countries. Enabling youth in crisis settings to contribute to their communities through work and enterprise is a guarantee for the present and an investment for the future.

Recognizing employment as a foundational ingredient for prosperous and peaceful societies, we, young MPs, propose to:

- In times of crisis, ensure that investment in employment is increased for programmes that support youth economic empowerment, including through job and micro-credit programmes, and other initiatives that can ensure a basic livable income.
- Ensure inclusive labour market policies that address the specific needs of resettled refugees. This includes advocacy for job assessment and placement services that provide language assistance and professional development, enabling refugees to integrate effectively into the workforce and contribute to their communities.
- Advocate for increased investment in humanitarian aid and its use towards the development of small businesses and support the creation of business incubators that facilitate entrepreneurship, empowering young people and those displaced to build sustainable livelihoods and to grow economically.
- Address the housing crisis faced in many countries, including through increased state investments to build affordable housing and providing subsidies to first-time homeowners.

The SDGs also emphasize “leaving no one behind”, yet many groups that are marginalized or in vulnerable situations continue to face significant barriers and discrimination in accessing opportunities and services. The notion of “sustainable development for all” must not be mere rhetoric, but a guiding principle that underpins all public policy. Intersectional approaches are needed. Young women are still too often disproportionately excluded from education and employment worldwide.

With six years to go to achieve the SDGs, we commit to walk the talk on “leaving no one behind”, including by:

- Adapting education and employment support services to meet the needs of all segments of society, genders and personal abilities.
- Enhancing public engagement with constituents to identify gaps and address the needs of all segments in society, including proactively reaching out to those in often overlooked places, such as rural areas, people with disabilities, the illiterate, marginalized groups and those facing discrimination.



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- Strengthening partnerships – both offline and online – with youth grassroots organizations, advisory councils, advocacy groups and student associations to better amplify their voices in our legislatures and policy discourses.
- Enhancing inter-parliamentary cooperation and the exchange of good practices to better amplify the voices of marginalized groups and those in vulnerable situations, and ensure that public policies address their needs. Also build inter-parliamentary solidarity for countries in vulnerable situations due to climate change, such as SIDS.

On the eve of International Day of Democracy (15 September 2024), and at a time when so many young people feel anxious about the future, education, employment and inclusion are ingredients that can light the torch of hope. Here, in Armenia, the “Land of Stones”, let us reverse the trends of hopelessness and rebuild it brick by brick. We, young MPs, boldly declare that we are up to this task and will work with partners, and with each other, to ensure that there are no more lost generations.

We express our thanks to the National Assembly of Armenia for hosting this Tenth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians and for providing the platform to unite young MPs for this common goal.