



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9606th meeting

Friday, 26 April 2024, 11.30 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Camilleri. (Malta)

Members:

Algeria.	Mr. Merabet
China.	Mr. Niu Xiaoqiang
Ecuador.	Mr. De La Gasca
France.	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Guyana.	Ms. Benn
Japan.	Mr. Kitada
Mozambique.	Mr. Kumanga
Republic of Korea.	Mr. June Byoung Park
Russian Federation.	Mrs. Mazaeva
Sierra Leone.	Mr. Bayoh
Slovenia.	Mr. Slamic
Switzerland.	Mrs. Baumann-Bresolin
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.	Ms. Alldridge
United States of America.	Ms. Luquetta

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

The role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean

Letter dated 2 April 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2024/288)

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The meeting was resumed at 11.30 a.m.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Malta for choosing the important theme of this meeting, namely, the role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean. I would also like to thank the briefers for their briefings.

This meeting is being held at a time when the world in general and the Mediterranean region in particular are witnessing a number of complex and multidimensional challenges owing to continued conflicts, security challenges, economic difficulties and climate change, which have led to many security challenges for the countries of the Mediterranean region. Young persons, who represent the majority of the population of the Mediterranean countries, especially in the southern part of the region, have been among the primary victims of those situations and the most affected by their repercussions at all levels, as they led to the depletion of the energy and capabilities of that group and prevented the achievement of their aspirations and ambitions and caused them frustration and despair. That in turn has affected the countries of the region and their security and development situations.

We reiterate the importance of the role of young persons in promoting the solidarity, resilience and sustainability of communities. Therefore, greater attention must be focused on providing young persons with a stimulating environment, effectively and institutionally integrating them in their communities, and expanding their participation in decision-making and in establishing policies. They also must be enabled to receive an education that meets their needs and aspirations and, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, provided with decent work; strengthened against all forms of exclusion and marginalization; and protected from the effects of violence, terrorism, human trafficking gangs and organized crime, the latter of which have become more active in the Mediterranean region in recent years.

The repercussions of the security challenges in the Mediterranean region have affected everyone without exception and require that cooperation and solidarity be promoted through comprehensive and participatory approaches aimed at addressing the root causes of

the security challenges and developing effective solutions, with a focus on the active participation of young persons, as they are the most affected by those challenges and given their energy and promising potential to contribute to reconstruction, sustainability and stability. That must be done on an equal footing and without discrimination.

In that context, Tunisia reiterates its call for concerted efforts to comprehensively address irregular migration and its security repercussions and root causes, especially the development gap between the two sides of the Mediterranean, in addition to the successive global crises, which have had lasting consequences, through the adoption of policies that support opportunities for growth and joint development and innovation while ensuring the sharing of responsibilities and respect for national legislation and the priorities of all countries. We also call for greater regional and international efforts to advance the settlement of conflicts and crises in the region that cause humanitarian suffering and threaten regional and international peace and security.

In that context, we reaffirm that security and stability in the region cannot be restored in the light of the ongoing occupation, war crimes, genocide and forced displacement to which the Palestinian people have been subjected for decades and which have been exacerbated by the occupation authorities' disregard for international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. In that regard, we once again call on the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities to put an end to the aggression of the occupying forces against the Palestinian people, youth, women and children in Gaza and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory as they violate their basic rights and eliminate their capabilities, future and aspirations.

In conclusion, we reiterate Tunisia's commitment to young persons. We are keen to enhance their participation and role and to make them bearers of the message of peace, work and construction in addition to making them key actors in achieving a peaceful, coherent, balanced and sustainable Tunisian, Mediterranean and international community.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Altarsha (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting, which allows us to listen to

the voices of young persons and to learn about their concerns, as they represent the largest population group in the Mediterranean region and the most affected by the enormous multifaceted challenges facing the region, which limit their full and effective participation in advancing their communities, achieving sustainable development, spreading a culture of peace and promoting stability.

Like other segments of society, young persons in Syria face grave repercussions of the terrorist war and the acts of aggression waged against it, which have harmed the country's development gains achieved over decades and have had negative impacts on young persons, changing the course of their lives by pushing some of them to defend their homeland in the face of terrorist organizations or to engage in voluntary and relief work through national institutions and civil associations. Some dropped out of school, searched for livelihood to support their families or fell victim to human trafficking gangs. Others risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean in unseaworthy, overcrowded boats, often ending up in shipwrecks and drowning.

The biggest challenge facing Syrian youth today is the catastrophic effects of the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States and the European Union on Syria and the consequent unfair restrictions on trade, finance and investment, which limit the ability to create jobs, lead to increased poverty, lack of economic stability and compel the youth to migrate, seek asylum and search for employment opportunities elsewhere, not to mention the profound psychological and social impact of unilateral coercive measures on Syrian youth. Moreover, siege policies have deprived Syrians from enjoying their fundamental rights, gaining access to opportunities, meeting their subsistence needs and getting vital services, as noted by Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Ms. Alena Douhan.

The challenges faced by young persons are exacerbated by the Israeli occupation of the Golan and the Arab territories causing a threat to international peace and security in the region, along with the illegal United States and Turkish military presence on the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic. Those forces and their proxies from terrorist militias and organizations commit criminal acts and loot national resources leading to serious impacts that prolong the crisis and increase the suffering of Syrians. Those challenges are also exacerbated by the politicization

of humanitarian action and the decline in funding, especially for early recovery and livelihood projects that empower young persons to build their future, effectively contribute to the economy and rebuild what was destroyed by terrorism.

Based on its belief in the pivotal role of young persons as agents of change and active members of society, and despite the grave challenges it faces, the Syrian Government has paid special attention to strengthening the role of young persons and their participation in public affairs and in building society and has adopted a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the protection and promotion of their rights, by providing free education, job opportunities, vocational training and capacity-building. The Government has also encouraged youth ideas and initiatives and turning them into implemental programmes. It has employed youth in local administration and promoted their participation in social activities and in the efforts to combat extremism, defend human rights, ensure social justice and the rule of law and counter environmental challenges and the effects of climate change. Moreover, we support the Youth to Be Free entrepreneurs and carry out micro and small projects through the development of the relevant legal, legislative and technical structure while removing obstacles that impede their way. We also provide social protection guarantees, financial assistance and housing for youth and ensure their effective political participation.

Syria looks forward to the support of Member States in order to enhance the livelihoods of all Syrians, especially young women and men, by providing the necessary support to promote their livelihoods. We ensure that the State extends its authority over all the Syrian territory, promotes the rule of law, increases early-recovery projects, along with youth and women enabling programmes, while also ensuring gender equality. We also support vulnerable groups, including the injured, those with disabilities, the displaced and the victims of terrorism. We create the circumstances conducive to the return of refugees, and we put an end to all negative practices, such as incitement, discrimination, hatred and violence that they might have faced in host countries.

Since education is the backbone of any society, the Syrian Government also seeks support in rebuilding schools and damaged educational centres. We address the repercussions of the terrorist war and acts of aggression against the education sector, which led to

keeping 1.8 million Syrian children and adolescents out of school. We empower our youth to continue their educational attainment, as Syria had achieved a distinguished level of education prior to the terrorist war waged against us. We also try to limit school dropout.

My country's delegation stresses the importance of international cooperation to counter the threat of using modern technology and social media to lure youth, recruit them to the ranks of terrorist organizations and propagate hate speech, extremism, violence and terrorism. It also stresses the need to leverage youth as a driving force and solid determination to spread human and cultural values, face extremism and terrorism ideologies and promote a culture of peace, respect and solidarity among peoples, cultures and religions.

In conclusion, we must recognize the pivotal role that youth play not just in the future, but also in the present. Promoting an environment that can enhance their abilities and ensure their participation in the development processes is not just a moral duty, but a strategic necessity. We must invest in the empowerment and prosperity of youth today, because that is a building block for a better and more prosperous future for all where dialogue triumphs over disagreement and hope over despair.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Miller (Israel): We wish to thank Malta for convening this very important debate. The Mediterranean is a rich and diverse region that faces multifaceted social, economic and environmental challenges, all of which play a part in regional security. Young persons, as agents of change, play a major role in addressing those challenges, but are all-too-often neglected.

One urgent challenge in the region is climate change. While countries and regions in the world feel its effects, the Mediterranean basin is already suffering a water deficit and is experiencing a temperature rise much faster than originally predicted by climate scientists. Our youth understands that the need to shrink our carbon footprint is urgent and critical, and Israel has made a number of advances in renewable energy technologies. Israel is also among the global leaders in new technologies for water efficiency and water reclamation. I am confident that in the near future, today's youth will make even greater advances, which will benefit our entire region and beyond.

For that, we must ensure the full and meaningful participation of young persons in climate-related decision-making processes.

On 7 October, in a heinous, indiscriminate terrorist attack, more than 1,200 women and men in Israel were murdered, the majority of whom were young persons between the ages of 18 and 39. They experienced the most horrific attack, which included acts of murder, torture, the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and hostage-taking. Those crimes were committed in different locations, including inside civilian homes and safe rooms and on the streets.

One such location was the Nova music festival. On 7 October hundreds of young persons came together to celebrate peace and happiness. As the Hamas and other terrorist organizations began their planned an orchestrated attack, the blissful scene quickly became a horrific massacre. Young women were subjected to rape, including gang rape. People were mutilated, murdered and kidnapped by Hamas terrorists and other Palestinian armed groups.

The video message published by Hamas on Wednesday, showing Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who has been held in Gaza for over 200 days now, is a grave reminder of the atrocities that the young participants of the Nova festival went through on that day. In the video, one can see him, missing his left arm, which was severely injured during the 7 October attack. The video is a challenging and chilling testimony to the cruelty Israel is dealing with — a terror organization that kills, maims, abducts and tortures with one aim only — the annihilation of the State of Israel.

For those who survived the attack, a long journey towards physical and emotional recovery awaits. The number of young persons dealing with trauma and emotional difficulties as a result of 7 October and its aftermath has risen exponentially. It is important that we acknowledge the emotional burden of conflicts on young persons and ensure that they all receive adequate health services, including mental health and psychosocial support.

What should the international community, including the Council, do in the face of that reality?

First, do not turn a blind eye to Israeli youth. The latest youth, peace and security report (S/2024/207), although it covers the period between January 2022 and December 2023, nevertheless does not contain a single

mention of the 7 October Hamas-led terror attack on the hundreds of Israeli young persons, including those taken hostage. The Council must condemn the indiscriminate targeting of young persons in the 7 October attack and hold accountable those responsible.

Secondly, young persons play a significant role in peace mediation and peacebuilding. That starts with education. The international community, including the Security Council, must condemn incitement to violence and extremism, as well as the encouragement of discrimination, including anti-Semitism, in educational curriculums and programmes. There is an obvious link between the 7 October attack and the years-long incitement fuelled by textbooks used by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its educational curriculum. Young persons should be taught the values of peace and tolerance, not hate and the commission of acts of unspeakable violence.

Thirdly, the international community must call and push for an immediate release of all hostages still held in Gaza, among them young Israelis, such as Hersh Goldberg-Polin. As Jews in Israel around the world are marking the holiday of Passover, the holiday of freedom, we pray for the release of all hostages still being held in Gaza. Let us bring them home now.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Gómez Hernández (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Security in the Mediterranean is one of the main concerns of the international community and the Security Council. I am therefore grateful to the Maltese presidency for convening this high-level debate and for inviting Spain to participate.

In a context of global tensions, the Mediterranean region is affected by a combination of threats and challenges that know no borders, directly affect young people — who represent a third of our population, half of them in the eastern and southern Mediterranean — and deserve solid and coordinated responses.

But the Mediterranean is much more than that. It is a shared space, a meeting place, a forum for dialogue and a region of opportunities in which young people must be protagonists and have the right to pin their hopes for peace, well-being and progress.

Spain has been working resolutely on youth empowerment. At the national level, the Youth Strategy 2030, approved in May 2022, is the fundamental

instrument that gives coherence to the various sectoral policies on youth. In its foreign policy towards the Mediterranean and in the action deployed by Spanish cooperation, youth has also been occupying pride of place — so much so that youth and regional integration will be two cross-cutting priorities of the update of the regional cooperation programme with the Arab world, to be launched shortly.

Consistent with its firm and unwavering commitment to multilateralism and to the Mediterranean, Spain has been promoting the forging and consolidation of a regional partnership, launched during the 1995 Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held in Barcelona, and which is currently embodied in the Union for the Mediterranean — a partnership and organization that we must preserve and strengthen, with youth at the heart of its agenda.

The Union for the Mediterranean is the only regional organization that brings together the 27 member States of the European Union and the 16 countries of the eastern and southern Mediterranean. The work it has carried out since its creation, in 2008, demonstrates that, notwithstanding the differences that may exist among some of its members, there is a commonality of interests among the Mediterranean partners.

As in other areas of work, the Union for the Mediterranean has promoted a youth policy approach, the implementation of projects and, most important, a real rapprochement between young people on both shores of the Mediterranean. The implementation of the Youth Strategy 2021 and the adoption of a Youth Agenda last November, in a meeting held in Barcelona with the participation of more than 100 young people from different Mediterranean countries, are particularly important milestones.

On the other hand, when talking about the Mediterranean and, of course, youth, the indispensable and valuable contribution of the Anna Lindh Foundation to the promotion of dialogue and the empowerment of young people cannot be overlooked. For that reason, Spain also applauds the work that the Foundation has undertaken and that it continues to support to promote dialogue among young people with the aim of generating alternative narratives to extremist discourse and providing platforms for young people to contribute to the construction of open, inclusive and resilient communities.

Last November we had planned to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Union for the Mediterranean at the eighth Union for the Mediterranean Regional Forum. However, the attack launched by Hamas and the ensuing conflict led us to devote the session to the situation in Israel and Palestine, in a meeting which, as some members know, was very well attended and allowed us to identify elements of consensus on the resolution of the conflict. As has been the case with the empowerment of women, the creation of employment opportunities and the definition of a youth agenda, in November the Union for the Mediterranean rose to the occasion and responded, true to its mandate to promote dialogue and cooperation.

Let me conclude by recalling that this year the ninth Union for the Mediterranean Regional Forum should lead to the election of a new Secretary General and a new southern co-presidency. As we await the outcome, Spain can only express its deep appreciation to the Jordanian co-presidency and to the Secretary General for his commitment, effort and leadership and for the progress that the Mediterranean and the Union for the Mediterranean have made, despite difficulties and serious crises such as the current one.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.