

Communiqué

Seventh UNESCO NGO Forum Organized in partnership with the MiSK Foundation

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 3-4 May 2017

1. We, the participating NGOs of the Seventh UNESCO NGO Forum, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and UNESCO, in partnership with the MiSK Foundation, held under the theme of Youth and their Social Impact, welcome the large international nature of the event. For the past two days, we have come together with over 400 NGOs, from over 70 countries and over 2,000 registered delegates, 70 per cent of whom were under the age of 35 years.
 2. We further note that the Forum is the first such event to take place in the Arab region and are grateful to the MiSK Foundation and the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their hospitality and for creating a space for open dialogue about important global issues.
 3. Plenary sessions were held exploring issues such as: Youth Engagement and Its Potential for Social Change, Optimizing the Impact of the Digital Native, Cultural Diversity as an Essential Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue, What Skills for Young People Today, Optimizing the Power of Youth for Peacebuilding, Educating for a Sustainable Future and The Voice of Youth: Their Vision of Social Change.
 4. We are grateful for the inspiring key-note speeches given by leaders from the NGO community, governments, international organizations and the cultural, sports and business sectors.
 5. We acknowledge the highly interactive nature of the Forum, which utilized technology including real-time polling and a conference app in order to maximise participation by delegates.
 6. We praise the entrants and finalists who suggested ideas in a competition for the MiSK Global NGO Award, noting the winner, Water Youth Network, and finalists Hive COLAB, FA.VELA, SOM Editorial Collectiva and CIOFF. We are grateful to the MiSK Foundation for generously funding the \$30,000 prize for the winning NGO project and \$20,000 each for the finalists. We also thank the panellists.
7. **Six breakout sessions were held for a 'Roadmap to Impact'**. These enabled participants to debate key topics and make recommendations, which were as follows:
- 7.1 *Workshop 1: Youth and Entrepreneurship and Volunteering: Promoting Engagement at Local and International Levels.* Delegates recommended that young people need to be facilitated to engage in dialogue with leaders at the local, national and international levels; NGOs need capacity-building to be able to create impactful opportunities and programming with young people; there should be better outreach to the most excluded youth in society, including those with special needs; companies should offer more volunteering opportunities for staff, possibly embedded in contracts as part of corporate responsibility; there must be a more scientific approach to NGO impact; more opportunities should be given for young people to be paid while working for NGOs; opportunities should be created for retirees to become volunteers so that they can transfer their experience to young people; funding should be boosted for monitoring and financial management in projects and to enable NGOs to recruit consultants.
 - 7.2 *Workshop 2: Protection of Cultural Heritage: Can Young People Make a Difference.* Attendees called for support for intergenerational dialogue and education as tools for the transmission of cultural values and traditions; innovative solutions for the promotion of cultural diversity and cultural exchange including new spaces to facilitate this, some of which may use digital technology; boosting the role of peer-to-peer and non-formal education to increase youth participation; and the involvement of youth at international fora on the subject.

- 7.3 *Workshop 3: Using Digital Tools for the Promotion of Social Interaction and Engagement.* On security and privacy, delegates suggested a global ethics code for the digital and social media arenas and called for an international dialogue in which NGOs would take a lead. Delegates also called for a labour right of being able to disconnect from the online world, noting that NGOs must also have this right. Attendees suggested building more bridges between NGOs and technology companies that are hired to develop applications for NGO projects.
- 7.4 *Workshop 4: Fostering Equal Opportunities for Young Men and Women.* Attendees suggested that there is a need to include the private sector more; that challenging questions can be included in the educational curriculum; policies should be improved addressing new challenges; and platforms created for stakeholders to collaborate, including beyond this conference using social media.
- 7.5 *Workshop 5: Maximising the Fight Against Climate Change for Sustainable Development.* Delegates proposed developing a certification system at the UN to monitor the extent to which projects are achieving their goals; NGOs should consider their own environmental impact; and recommended more youth participation in voluntary service as tool for education for sustainable development and in the fight against climate change.
- 7.6 *Workshop 6: How can NGOs and Government Collaborate for Social Good?* Attendees recommended creating a 'heat map' in ministries of development to identify needs; social entrepreneurship to accelerate the process of collaboration; and for a curriculum in universities to equip people to run non-profit organizations.

8. The UNESCO NGO Forum therefore makes the following recommendations:

- 8.1 Following the many debates and discussions held during the Forum, we note that the young delegates have shown themselves to be the change-makers, offering creative solutions to manifold challenges.
- 8.2 We call upon NGOs to scale up young people's initiatives locally, nationally and internationally, to integrate young people within all levels of their structures and accompany them in developing the key competences they need to maximize their active citizenship and social impact, particularly through non-formal and informal learning.
- 8.3 In order to build the capacity of NGOs in this regard, we further recommend more support from external stakeholders such as governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses and individuals, including pro bono, management expertise, facilities, training schemes and funding.
- 8.4 We encourage the UNESCO Director-General to take these recommendations into consideration in the implementation of the programme budget for 2018-2021.

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