

Recommendations of the 2nd Global Youth Forum for a Culture of Lawfulness Kyoto, Japan, 3 and 4 December 2022

We, young people – learners, leaders, advocates and changemakers – from around the world, gathered in Kyoto, Japan, on 3 and 4 December 2022 to participate in the Second Global Youth Forum for a Culture of Lawfulness, with the aim of sharing our ideas, amplifying our voices and making recommendations for action that will ignite positive change for a safe, inclusive and peaceful society,

Considering the overall theme of the Forum, “The role of youth in achieving a diverse and inclusive society”, and convinced that young people have a crucial role to play in fulfilling this vision, including in relation to the two thematic agenda items, “Building a society free from online defamation and cyberbullying” and “Youth involvement in and disengagement from organized crime: the role of youth in preventing organized crime”,

Emphasizing the need for strengthened international cooperation among States and the role that the United Nations, other intergovernmental organizations, civil society and young people can play when it comes to understanding, addressing and tackling complex and nuanced social issues such as those relating to crime prevention and criminal justice,

Recognizing that no change can be positive, effective or sustainable if it does not meaningfully include the perspectives and participation of young people, whose voices, actions and policy ideas have an impact on the immediate and long-term future,

Deeply appreciating the efforts undertaken by the Government of Japan, with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in bringing the vision of the Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to life through, among other measures, the establishment of the Global Youth Forum for a Culture of Lawfulness, which serves as a prime example of a permanent youth mechanism that will contribute to a global policymaking landscape that is more just, fair, accessible and sustainable,

Recommend the following to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for its consideration:

Building a society free from online defamation and cyberbullying

Educating the community and young people on the safe use of technology

Considering that, in our hyperconnected and hyperdigitized world, the use of technology and the Internet is an undeniable constant of young people's lives, Governments should make an effort to educate people of all ages on the safe use of technology.

Such efforts should be aimed at promoting digital literacy while safeguarding digital privacy and preventing the harmful use of personal data by third parties. Governments and educational institutions should cooperate to introduce digital and media literacy classes to curricula.

Digital literacy education should be based on the principle of intergenerational learning, with a view to engaging young people in teaching the ethical use of the Internet to adults, including the elderly. Young people can contribute to educating members of the community by taking on the role of educator. They can use the Internet and social media networks as platforms for this education. The provision of digital and media literacy training, including in relation to social media channels, from a young age will help ensure that young people know how to safely use technology and are aware of the issues of online defamation and cyberbullying.

Enhancing protection for victims of online defamation and rehabilitation for offenders through strengthened public-private partnerships

Governments should focus on promoting human rights for victims of online defamation and cyberbullying in order to raise awareness of the issue. Governments and private sector entities should collaborate with celebrities and influencers to raise awareness of the issue and to educate young people on consequences of online defamation and cyberbullying. Although the terms "online defamation" and "cyberbullying" are often used, the harm inflicted on victims is not widely discussed. As online defamation and cyberbullying can lead to physical bullying and abuse, it is important to provide victims with all the help necessary.

Private sector entities, such as Internet service providers, should support the rights of users by employing innovative digital solutions, such as those based on artificial intelligence, to detect and filter any inappropriate content before it is published and becomes widely available online. Private sector entities, with the support of Governments, should work to further develop existing technology, such as improving reporting mechanisms so that they provide feedback to victims in a timely manner. However, in order to ensure freedom of speech, Governments should encourage or request Internet Service Providers to develop their own user guidelines, including by simplifying their user policies. User guidelines must be simple and easy to access in a wide range of languages. Law enforcement agencies and private sector entities should cooperate to monitor those that post harmful content. Providing a safe online space for users while ensuring their freedom of speech should be a priority for Internet service providers.

Anonymity is a factor that often causes online defamation and cyberbullying. However, at the same time, online reporting platforms where victims of online defamation and cyberbullying can anonymously report cases and details of abuse, without fear of retaliation, should be provided. These platforms are a vital channel for communicating with victims and for gathering information on the issue. Further international discussion on anonymity is necessary.

Governments and private sector entities should seek to strengthen partnerships in order to increase the capacity of young people to differentiate illegal online activity from harmful content, and to identify the appropriate action on the basis of prevention, retribution and reconciliation.

Governments should provide victims with legal, psychological and financial support. Counselling frameworks should be established for students, with the assistance of educational institutions. Counsellors should be trained, licenced and regulated by administrators to ensure the provision of high-quality support.

Governments and Internet service providers should also provide victims of online defamation and other violent behaviours with the opportunity to see that their right to be forgotten is always upheld, through the removal and erasure of harmful online content that wrongfully and unjustly affects their quality of life.

Finally, Governments should work with non-governmental organizations and private sector entities to increase the number of rehabilitation centres available to offenders in order to deter them from committing similar crimes in the future. In terms of penalties, offenders can be instructed to carry out unpaid social work. As most online bullies and attackers suffer from personal problems, it is important to carry out further research on the modus operandi behind such acts and the underlying causes that determine offenders' actions so that evidence-based knowledge can be used to inform prevention measures.

Promoting international cooperation to address and counter online defamation and cyberbullying

Governments, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders should engage in partnerships and other forms of cooperation with youth-led civil society organizations in order to provide a safe online environment for everyone. Such partnerships and cooperation should be mutually reinforcing so that all parties cooperate to share knowledge and to provide opportunities for collaboration in formal and non-formal educational settings, and at the community level, where young people can be meaningfully educated and empowered in relation to online dangers.

By cooperating with young people and youth-led civil society organizations, Governments and international organizations give young people a chance to be heard at the international level. It is important for young people to have a platform to share their message with those in authority and

to contribute to their communities. States should encourage platform operators to provide educational tools for users.

States should cooperate on legal enforcement and harmonizing legal approaches so that offenders can be held legally liable in relation to transnational crimes. States should consider creating treaties or conventions that enable them to enforce online safety measures. The introduction and performance of cybersafety regulations and action against online defamation and cyberbullying should be made available to the United Nations. Legal and financial support on cybersafety, such as judicial revision of technology, should be shared between States.

Non-governmental and international organizations, such as the United Nations Children's Fund and UNODC, should hold forums and provide volunteering opportunities for young people in cooperation with local and community-based organizations to help drive engagement with the issue of online defamation and cyberbullying.

Strengthening law enforcement on online defamation and cyberbullying

Online defamation and cyberbullying is criminalized in most countries. However, victims may refrain from reporting incidents because of social pressure. Law enforcement entities should actively engage with citizens to raise awareness of the seriousness of the issue and provide private, safe helplines for victims to seek legal help. While penalties should be fair and proportionate to the damage done to victims, Governments should consider introducing stricter legal liability for online defamation and cyberbullying in order to deter potential crimes.

A system of judicial review is necessary with regard to technology as laws on the use of technology can become outdated very quickly. Governments should provide digital and media literacy training for law enforcement agencies and judicial workers so they have the necessary knowledge about online defamation and cyberbullying. Guidelines should be provided to law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and privacy of victims and strict confidentiality in relation to cases.

If litigation is not a viable option for victims, Governments should consider developing mechanisms of remedy. As litigation is expensive and time-consuming, Governments should be able to provide alternatives for victims seeking compensation.

Youth participation in and disengagement from organized crime: the role of youth in preventing organized crime

Enhancing education, raising awareness and building capacity among young people

Governments should offer young people inclusive learning opportunities relating to criminal justice and crime prevention in formal and non-formal education settings (such as sports or integrity clubs, after-school gatherings and creative arts-based performances). This should be aimed at exchanging knowledge, research and studies on the preventive role of healthy family and community structures, and on sharing data on local organized crime activity. Governments should also foster meaningful youth empowerment and engagement at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels through capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives, without leaving anyone behind. This should include youth-led initiatives that focus on providing young people with a positive framework of action, mentorship and skills to enable peer-to-peer exchange and the sharing of experiences and knowledge. It should also provide the opportunity for joint participation in the design of community-focused initiatives on countering organized crime. This could include storytelling initiatives and inspirational sharing by victims, ex-juvenile offenders and public figures, who can be changemakers in the community.

Governments and international organizations should work together, using age-appropriate methods, to integrate integrity, ethics, sustainable development (and the critical role of Sustainable Development Goal 16), and civic participation into educational programmes. How these themes are mutually reinforcing should be a key focus, with learning formats including cartoons and animation-based textbooks and videos. Moreover, Governments and international organizations should capitalize on young people's creative thinking, digital and entrepreneurial skills, and dedication to community-level social interaction, such as in sports-related events and media, art and performance-related activities that have a key role in promoting youth crime-prevention strategies. To enable this, Governments should work with relevant international organizations and civil society organizations to establish joint mechanisms and policies that are aimed at framing an educational and awareness-raising approach and geared towards enabling young people to become catalysts in addressing risk factors and in preventing and helping others disengage from organized crime.

Education, capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives should be designed with the involvement of young people, educators and academic institutions, not only to enhance understanding of crime prevention and to strengthen cooperation between Governments and young people, but also to incorporate the voices of young people in policymaking. The institutionalization of the participation of young people in governance and the development of relevant legal frameworks (e.g. by including education on organized crime and integrity in curricula) is important.

Governments should establish extra-curricular educational programmes at secondary schools that are aimed providing knowledge on organized crime. Such programmes should result, when successfully completed by students, in the provision of school credits based on a pre-determined structure. This positive reward system will incentivize students to learn about these topics and to take advantage of classes offered by criminal justice organizations. Such programmes should seek to establish a mentorship system involving students and teachers, including the provision of assistance in the design and implementation of community-level youth-led initiatives to counter organized crime.

Governments should work closely with international organizations that are addressing threats from organized crime across the world. In doing so, States should support youth-led, grass-roots organizations working at the community and local levels to better prepare young people to address the issues posed by organized crime that relate to diverse geographical regions and sociocultural contexts.

Governments, international organizations and community-level support groups should be aware of the fundamental human rights of young offenders when working together to design and implement rehabilitation measures.

Amplifying youth economic empowerment and skills development

Governments should tackle the risk factors and root causes behind youth engagement in organized crime, such as social exclusion, inequality, poverty and discrimination, through the provision of free-to-access opportunities for developing skills related to becoming economically empowered and to making healthy life choices. These opportunities shall be available to all young people, in particular those that belong to at-risk, vulnerable and underprivileged groups. Such activities should also focus on improving access for young people to social entrepreneurship initiatives and should include support for those wishing to establish and/or scale up youth-led social enterprises that are aimed at supporting youth crime prevention in the community and beyond.

Governments and higher education institutions should also work with industry, businesses and civil society organizations to provide stronger leadership, skills development and employment training opportunities for young people, in particular those from marginalized and at-risk groups such as young people living in rural areas, young people who have dropped out of school, young people from low-income families and the children of prisoners. This support will help prevent them from getting involved with criminal organizations.

Such opportunities should be affordable and should be made available in the digital and physical environments, as appropriate, for the respective target groups in order to facilitate the highest possible level of participation.

Counsellors in schools and universities should identify, within the educational body, young people, in particular those at risk of exposure to organized crime and those belonging to vulnerable, low-income and underprivileged groups, with key skill sets and aspirations to take action against crime in their communities, and empower them to act as facilitators and mentors for young people. These individuals should be connected with the appropriate government bodies for capacity-building, scholarship and employment opportunities, such as internships and job shadowing.

National institutions, in particular educational ones, should incorporate educational components into their curricula to strengthen personal skills, including integrity and ethics, peacebuilding, gender equality, the rule of law and advocacy, to inspire and incentivize young people to be model citizens. These should be considered twenty-first-century skills, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, that are essential for every young person.

Private sector entities should be encouraged to offer skills training programmes and employment opportunities to young ex-offenders and prisoners to help them develop key skills and find meaningful employment that will help sustain their reintegration into society. Governments should encourage the private sector to facilitate the reintegration of ex-offenders with employment and skills development opportunities.

Providing rehabilitation support for youth offenders and victims of organized crime

Training, including that relating to potential future employment, should be a pillar of rehabilitation initiatives that are aimed at facilitating the rehabilitation of youth offenders and preventing their involvement in new crimes and at reducing recidivism, among other objectives.

Governments, civil society organizations and community leaders should collaborate with young people to establish mentorship programmes that provide peer-to-peer and family based socio-emotional support structures, with the aim of preventing youth involvement and re-involvement in organized crime. They should also work together to establish facilities where youth offenders can share their daily worries and receive mental health support.

Governments should provide vocational training programmes to youth offenders at correctional facilities. These programmes should be used to facilitate the entry or re-entry of these young people into the job market. This accessibility to the job market should be ensured through partnerships and agreements with private sector entities.

Governments should work with international and civil society organizations to provide youth offenders with help to keep their actions anonymous if they wish to, with the aim of protecting their right to be forgotten. Considering the significant influence of the mass media, Governments should encourage entities in this sector to avoid reporting the names of criminals. With the aim of preventing the disclosure of criminal records on the Internet, Governments should consider restricting the sharing of criminal records on social media networks.

Governments, international organizations, higher education institutions, research centres and civil society organizations should encourage further research on how to reconcile relations between victims and offenders in order to support victim rehabilitation. The importance of empirical data, including in providing evidence-based knowledge to inform rehabilitation measures, should not be underestimated. Finally, Governments should provide free psychological counselling in safe spaces for young people that are directly or indirectly victims of organized crime for the purpose of speeding up recovery, rehabilitation and personal healing from the harm caused by this type of victimization.

Strengthening public-private partnerships

Governments should promote strategic partnerships with private sector entities, academia, local youth groups and civil society organizations that are aimed at strengthening youth empowerment through the establishment of safe spaces for interdisciplinary dialogue, sports and artistic recreational activities and integrity clubs and informal learning centres with the purpose of facilitating and encouraging healthy social behavioural development among young people as a means of preventing involvement, directly or indirectly, with organized criminal groups.

Such partnerships should also seek to foster environments that allow young people to express and channel their creativity, support greater community-based rehabilitation, engage communities and meet the educational and employment needs of young people. To prevent young people from marginalized and underprivileged communities from falling behind and being involved in criminal activity, greater efforts should be made to ensure that they are the main beneficiaries of these partnerships.

Governments, international organizations and all relevant stakeholders should form partnerships to establish a series of national youth consultations on the phenomenon of organized crime and its effect on young people, with the aim of producing a regional roadmap for the implementation of youth-led initiatives to counter organized crime. Such a roadmap should be implemented at the regional and country levels and, in order to ensure accountability, youth monitoring councils should be established within national government entities, with duties including the production of monthly progress reports to be shared with young people in their countries. Such monitoring mechanisms should be established as permanent institutional bodies and should be supported by international organizations, such as UNODC.

Digital tools and the role of media in reducing organized crime

Governments should provide digital literacy programmes to young people that are aimed at promoting the safe use of information and communications technologies. These programmes should be focused on learning that will allow young people to better understand how to recognize organized crime and its main characteristics, and will help society better understand how to address the risk factors that lead to the involvement of young people in cyber-related crime, including cyber-organized crime.

These objectives should be achieved through the use of continuously updated open communications platforms that are employed to gather educational resources and share practices on the topic, and to provide opportunities for young people to develop their agency.

Such communications platforms should engage experts from the digital world, encompassing both traditional and social media, in order to enhance the impact of educational training, including to ensure that it reaches the widest possible youth audience.

In view of the risks that social media networks pose in relation to the involvement of young people in organized criminal activities, Governments should use these communications platforms to engage in constructive dialogue on the topic of the regulation of social media channels. Far too often, social media networks present and amplify a glorified image of organized crime, portraying it as an art form rather than a transnational activity that is detrimental to the development of peaceful and lawful societies. With this in mind, activity on social media networks that directly or indirectly falsely portrays such acts as behaviour to be followed or admired, should be monitored and acted upon, with the dual purpose of reducing the harmful impact of social media networks and enhancing the positive role that they play in helping young people to connect and generate positive change.

Youth advocates and community leaders should be empowered to use social media to change problematic narratives and to counter the glamourization of organized crime. The support of community influencers who want to help young people stay away from organized crime should be sought in relation to remodelled social media regulation.