

REPORT

ON TENTH IPU GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS

YEREVAN, ARMENIA

12 – 14 SEPTEMBER 2024

May 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the National Assembly of Armenia jointly organised the Tenth IPU Global Conference of the Young Parliamentarians on the theme *“Avoiding lost generations: Preserving education and employment in all circumstances”*. The significant event took place in Yerevan, Armenia, from the 12th to 14th September 2024. The conference is an initiative from the IPU which focused on empowering young parliamentarians by promoting active participation in the political sphere. The annual young parliamentarians conference also provides a global platform for young members of parliament to collaboratively identify common and innovative strategies aimed at advancing youth empowerment.

The delegation from the National Council comprised of three young members of parliament and 2 staff members:

- a) Hon. Emma T Muteka, MP and member of the IPU Board of Young Parliamentarians;
- b) Hon. Deriou A Benson, MP;
- c) Hon. Elder Filipe. MP;
- d) Ms. Dorothea Fransman, Deputy Director; and
- e) Ms. Priskila Kulula, Parliamentary Clerk

The Tenth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians brought together over 147 participants from 55 countries, with the age average of 37.2 years and 40% of being women. Participants came with a collective intent to deliberate on ensuring quality education and employment opportunities for all, that is necessary to build a fair and inclusive world where all has a chance to thrive. Their aim was also to reaffirm the commitment of empowering youth amidst multiple crises the world faced. Different topics were discussed at the conferences such as:

- a) Stocktaking on youth and employment;
- b) The impact of crisis on youth socio-economic rights and employment;
- c) Youth rights impacted by crises; and
- d) Leaving on behind: Delivering education and employment to the most vulnerable and marginalised and preserving youth empowerment in times of crisis.

2. BACKGROUND

The IPU's annual Global Conferences of Young Parliamentarians is a unique platform for young members of parliaments to get together, exchange, learn and define common and innovation strategies to advance the youth agenda. Since 2014, the Global Conference has focused on youth empowerment and had provided policy orientation in areas such as political participation, peace and prosperity. The conference would continue with its aim of empowering young parliamentarians and youth, under last year theme of *“Avoiding lost generations: Preserving education and employment in all circumstances”*.

3. OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

3.1 Opening Statement by the President of the National Assembly of Armenia - Mr Alen Simonyan

In his opening statement the Mr Simonyan, affirmed his support for the *“Yes to Youth in Parliaments”* initiative, which is also supported by many countries. He shared a proud moment to highlight that, as of many years ago, the Armenian Parliament has experienced a significant shift towards youth representation, with a youth majority now serving in their legislature. Furthermore, he stated that according to IPU research, the Parliament of the Republic of Armenia ranks first in the number of young parliamentarians.

Mr Simonyan made an emphatic call that the youth must actively participate in development of their countries as they have the flexibility to bring about change. He also guided the conference by emphasizing that over the two days of proceedings, the discussions would focus on critical topics such as youth education and employment. Mr Simonyan further emphasized that Knowledge and Skills will serve as powerful tools to navigate challenges and create positive change.

3.2 Opening Statement by the President of the IPU - Ms Tulia Ackson

In her opening statement, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) expressed her honour by addressing the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians for the first time in her role. She highlighted the conference as a vital platform to emphasize that democracy requires inclusion, which in turn depends on the active participation of young men and women.

She acknowledged the global challenges, such as conflicts threatening progress in education, employment, and equality, and emphasized the need to hear the voices of young people. Leaders must ensure that no generation is left behind, especially in these uncertain times.

The IPU President focused on the importance of education and employment, which she described as fundamental rights that form the basis of stable, prosperous societies. These empowers individuals to lead and contribute to their communities, especially in times of crisis. She called for education and employment to be prioritized on political agendas.

She stressed the need for accessible education, especially during crises, and called for investment in job placement and skill recognition to help migrants integrate into new communities. Additionally, she emphasized that young people should be involved in the creation of policies that affect them, echoing the IPU's young parliamentarians' message that "no decisions should be made about youth without youth."

Despite some progress, such as in Armenia, only 2.8% of parliamentarians globally are under 30, and this underrepresentation limits effective policy-making. The IPU President also highlighted the need for better women's representation, noting that fewer than 25% of parliamentarians worldwide are women, and only 1.4% are women under 30. She stressed the importance of dismantling barriers faced by marginalized groups, including people with disabilities and minorities.

In conclusion, the IPU President called for reforms to make parliaments more inclusive and accessible. She reaffirmed her commitment to ensuring no generation is left behind and emphasized the role of young people in shaping a better future through their courage and adaptability.

3.4 Opening Statement by the President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU – Mr. Dan Carden

In his address to the 10th IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, Mr. Carden extended his gratitude to the event host (National Assembly of Armenia), and offered special thanks to board members for their organizational efforts. He highlighted the uncertainty young people face today, noting that many feel as though they have prepared for a world that no longer exists. The optimism of past generations, which believed in a future of safety, freedom, and prosperity, has been shattered in recent years, revealing flaws in social and economic systems.

However, he emphasized that history is ongoing, and the future can be reshaped through deliberate choices.

As the President of the Board of Young Parliamentarians, he identified two key priorities, namely education and employment. He stressed that education provides a safe space for young people to develop their skills, integrate with others, and foster a culture of peace, while employment enables self-sufficiency and prevents marginalization and instability. His second priority is ensuring the protection of the human rights of all young people, ensuring their participation in political processes, education, and the economy without discrimination.

Mr Carden acknowledged that achieving these priorities is even more challenging in times of crisis, thus, making international cooperation essential. During the previous conference, held in 2023, Hanoi, Vietnam in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, participants agreed that national budgets should allocate at least 6% to education and training. He emphasized that by 2024, it is unacceptable for anyone, especially women and those in poverty, to be deprived of education.

Looking ahead, he emphasized the need for future-oriented education, particularly through investment in digital infrastructure and skills training. As to economic empowerment, he called for increased investment in youth employment, particularly in sectors like the green economy, and support for the innovation ecosystem, including funding for small businesses and startups.

He concluded by urging participants to send a strong message to the world as they were gathered in Yerevan, Armenia that they are creating a common agenda for a future where every young person can dream freely, act boldly, and live without fear. Together, they have the power to shape a better future for youth.

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1 YOUTH EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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 pay check; 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 cornerstones of the SDGs promise of leaving no one behind. Yet, without additional measures, by 2030, only one in six (6) countries will achieve the SDG target for universal secondary school completion.

Similarly, one in four (4) young people are not in education or training, with young women more than twice as likely as young men to be in this situation.

The conference expressed 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 impact 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 islands and developing States.

4.2 THE IMPACT OF CRISIS ON YOUTH SOCIO ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT

As per the discursions that emanated, decent employment is also central to everyone's participation in society, contributing to self-sufficiency and a sense of identity. Employment is 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.

In times of crisis, it is essential to prioritize increased investment in employment programs that support youth economic empowerment through job creation, micro-credit, and initiatives that ensure a basic livable income. Inclusive labor market policies should be implemented to meet the specific needs of resettled refugees, with advocacy for job assessments, placement services, language support, and professional development to aid their workforce integration and community contribution. Greater investment in humanitarian aid should be directed toward developing small businesses and establishing business incubators to encourage entrepreneurship. This approach empowers young people and displaced individuals to build sustainable livelihoods and foster economic growth. Additionally, the housing crisis must be addressed through increased state investment in affordable housing and the provision of subsidies to assist first-time homebuyers.

4.3 LEAVING NO, ONE BEHIND: DELIVERING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT TO THE MOST VULNERABLE AND MARGINALISED

Conference highlighted that 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 only six years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), young parliamentarians are committed to upholding the principle of "leaving no one behind." They aim to do this by adapting education and employment support services to cater to all segments of society, regardless of gender or personal abilities. Additionally, they pledge to enhance public engagement with constituents, identifying gaps and addressing the needs of often overlooked communities, such as those in rural areas, people with disabilities, the illiterate, marginalized groups, and those facing discrimination.

The parliamentarians also seek to strengthen partnerships, both offline and online, with youth grassroots organizations, advisory councils, advocacy groups, and student associations to ensure these voices are better represented in legislatures and policy discussions. Furthermore, they are committed to enhancing inter-parliamentary cooperation, sharing best practices to amplify the voices of marginalized groups and those in vulnerable situations. This cooperation also extends to building solidarity for countries at risk due to climate change, such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

5. UNCONFERENCE

The Unconference session is a newly introduced platform at the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, designed for young MPs to propose and select topics for discussion. Six countries, namely Bahrain, Djibouti, Madagascar, Namibia, Norway, and the United Kingdom submitted proposals aligned with the Conference theme, *"Avoiding Lost Generations: Preserving Education and Employment in All Circumstances,"* from a global perspective. Among these, Namibia and Bahrain received the most votes and were selected to lead sessions during the Unconference.

Namibia's proposal was, titled *“Global Solidarity in Crisis: Safeguarding Education in Conflict Zones,”* focused on the critical issue of protecting education in areas affected by conflict. With millions of young people at risk of losing their access to education due to war and instability, the session emphasized the urgent need for a unified global response. The discussion explored innovative strategies and international collaborations that have successfully maintained educational systems in conflict zones, including mobile learning initiatives, the creation of safe learning environments, and cross-border partnerships.

Young parliamentarians, educators, and international organizations engaged in an interactive session aimed at developing practical solutions to ensure education remains accessible in crisis situations. The session also addressed policy recommendations to enhance international commitments and funding mechanisms for education in emergencies.

Objectives of the Unconference session were:

- a) To discuss and identify effective strategies for safeguarding education in conflict zones;
- b) To promote global cooperation and partnerships in supporting education during crises; and
- c) To develop policy recommendations for international support and funding for education in emergencies.

6. CONCLUSION

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. Discussions led to the clarion call to reverse the trends of hopelessness and build brighter future brick by brick. Conference delegates also made a bold declaration that they are up to the task as young parliamentarians to work with partners, and with each other, to ensure that there are no more lost generations.

The young parliamentarians further committed themselves to work together to ensure that no generation is lost and urged everyone to safeguard education, employment in time of crisis and call all stakeholders to come on board to end conflict worldwide.

Over the past decade, the IPU has been dedicated to empowering young politicians, aiming to revitalize democracies and make them more inclusive for all generations. The IPU acknowledges their potential to bring innovative solutions to global challenges such as war, hunger, climate change etc.

The latest IPU report on Youth Participation in Parliament reveals that parliaments are getting slightly younger, 32.1% of MPs are aged 45 or under, compared with 30.2% in 2021 with small increases in the number of parliamentarians under the age of 45 years. However, despite the progress, parliaments are still a long way from representing young people proportionately.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Conference recommended the following:

- a) 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;
- b) 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;
- c) 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;
- d) 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 liveable income;
- e) 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;
- f) 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;

- g) Address the housing crisis faced in many countries, including through increased state investments to build affordable housing and providing subsidies to first-time homeowners in countries where this practise is not prevailing;
- h) Adapting education and employment support services to meet the needs of all segments of society, genders and personal abilities;
- i) 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;
- j) 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; and
- k) 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 Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

8. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

Article 7 of the Union Statutes of the IPU states that *“It is the duty of Members of the Union, to submit the resolutions of the Union within their respective Parliaments, in the most APPROPRIATE form; to communicate them to the Government; to stimulate their implementation and inform the Secretariat of the Union, as often as possible, particularly in the annual reports, as to the steps taken and the results obtained”*

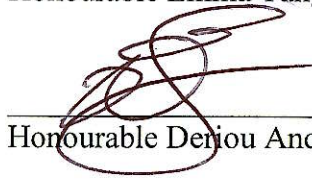
It is against this background that the young parliamentarians and the IPU National Group (Namibia) recommends that the Parliament of Namibia (National Council) discuss and support the report and inform the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

SIGNATURES



Honourable Emma Tangi Muteka, MP - Leader

17/05/25
Date



Honourable Deriou Andred Benson, MP

19/05/2025
Date