

Statement delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz at the Security Council on 23rd April, 2018:

“Open debate on Youth, Peace and Security”ⁱ

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Republic of Peru for convening today's meeting, and congratulate you on your presidency. I also thank the briefers for their excellent presentations.

Poland welcomes *the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* that will help shape a forward-looking strategy for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250. We appreciate this all-encompassing document which touches upon the most crucial issues affecting the young generation. We would favor an annual implementation report by the Secretary General on youth, peace and security, as well as yearly Security Council open debates on this issue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Empowerment and participation of youth are indispensable to enhance inclusivity and equality of our societies. Young people are the cornerstone of sustainable development and lasting peace. They need not only quality education, vocational training, skills development, access to digital technologies and services, but also employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The most constructive way to empower young people and ensure that they will not be radicalized is to offer them credible and constructive ways to positively contribute to their community. If youth remains excluded from national and international efforts aimed at building peace, then instability and extremism will continue to pose serious threats to our societies.

First of all, we should provide youth globally with a wide range of educational opportunities as a key element of development and improvement of their lives. The international community must mobilize resources to improve learning prospects of young people and to support inclusive labor policies. These goals are also an important part of Poland's foreign policy. We believe that in order to make a lasting change in the world, we need to act at the source of the problems.

I have recently visited Rwanda on the occasion of granting the Rafał Lemkin International Award in Kigali. I was also in Kibeho, a town in the southern part of the country, where I visited the Educational Institute for Blind Children led by the Polish Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross and funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Institute, which is the only educational facility for blind children in Rwanda, provides its students not only with basic education, but also with vocational training, thus preparing them to enter the labor market.

It contributes positively to the change of attitude of the Rwandan society towards blind children. This unique project is an excellent example of an inclusive and comprehensive approach to development, which we promote as part of our foreign policy.

There are examples of such approach in other countries too. In Lebanon, for instance, we have implemented, together with our German partners, the project of rehabilitation of public schools for children of both refugees and the local community. In Jordan and Lebanon, we have been providing informal education to young Syrian refugees, often excluded from the national educational system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security was a valuable step in recognizing the needs and potential of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. It reaffirmed the important role youth can play in enhancing sustainability and inclusiveness, as well as in the success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

We need to acknowledge different prospects of young people worldwide in employment, education, health, civic and political spheres.

Judging from Poland's experience, youth is deeply committed to engaging in non-governmental activities and contributes significantly to the culture of peace on different levels and in different areas.

The Solidarity movement in the 1980s contributed greatly to the peaceful transition to democracy in Poland and in countries of the whole region. As a phenomenon combining a trade union, a social movement and an aspiration for freedom and respect for human rights, Solidarity was a non-violent struggle against the authoritarian communist regime. Youth played a prominent role therein.

Pope John Paul II strongly supported Polish society in its uphill struggle for democracy. His close ties with young people are also well known. In the message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace in 1985, Pope John Paul II stated:

“Young people must not be satisfied with an instinctive desire for peace: this desire must be transformed into a firm moral conviction that encompasses the full range of human problems and builds on deeply treasured values”.

Poland strongly supports the engagement of young people in the democratic processes, as it increases their visibility and political participation. At the same time, young people remain highly vulnerable, therefore all efforts are needed to strengthen their protection and address their particular needs.

Young people are recognized as agents of change, entrusted to fulfill their own potential and build a world fit for future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland supports strategies and programs that promote youth-led initiatives fostering intergenerational dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation. In 2016, young people from all over the world came to the city of Kraków in Poland to meet Pope Francis and to celebrate the World Youth Day.

These 1,6 million young people brought with them the spirit of peace, solidarity and friendliness. We should act together in a similar way to address all symptoms of violence and ensure there is less and less racial, ethnic and religious prejudice.

Youth from any region of the world needs a positive environment to develop their potential. Poland welcomes the proposals included in *the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*.

We agree that it is indispensable to make more efforts to allow young people fully benefit from their rights and to provide them with a voice helping them become active and responsible citizens. We also agree that it is pivotal to increase economic and educational opportunities for all young people, which in turn helps build more peaceful and equal societies.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I shall conclude by underlining the primary role and responsibility of national governments in the process of youth empowerment as part of the efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security.

If we are serious about ensuring better life for our families and future generations, there is simply no alternative to investing in young people, giving them a voice in all relevant decision-making processes and building solid partnerships with youth as a bridge to a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world.

ⁱ *Please, check against delivery*