

90 Youth Voices statement

The 90 Youth Voices brought 90 young leaders from 43 countries together as part of the 90th anniversary of the British Council. We are young activists, journalists, content creators, artists, technology experts, researchers and entrepreneurs who have previously been involved in British Council programmes around the world. From 1 to 5 July, we had the opportunity to come together in the UK to meet policymakers, representatives of youth organisations, civil society and local authorities. As a group we explored the role of young people in shaping the future of their communities. As a result, we adopted the following statement:

We are deeply concerned about several pressing social and environmental issues and inequities in our society; social inequalities are having disproportionately negative effects on marginalised groups including women, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities and youth among others, particularly on their education, wellbeing and life opportunities. Climate change is threatening the present and the future of our planet, worsening these inequalities and further endangering marginalised communities. The lack of sustainable peace and social cohesion, along with pervasive poverty and inadequate infrastructure, demand immediate action. Furthermore, technological disparities such as the lack of access to the internet and essential equipment, along with limited digital literacy programmes in many parts of the world, hinder progress by making it more difficult for young people to gain the skills needed for better job opportunities and economic advancement. We believe that enhancing mental health awareness, reducing stereotypes, fostering cross-cultural understanding, protecting free speech and human rights, supporting youth activities and improving infrastructure are crucial steps towards creating a more inclusive, informed, resilient and peaceful society.

Despite the challenges and inequalities, **young people should not be viewed merely as a problem to solve, but as valuable social agents for solutions.** Today, many young people are equipped with the motivation, values, skills, innovative mindsets, energy, and technological

expertise to bring fresh and effective solutions that address the needs of our generation and beyond. However, our potential is often underutilised by society and stakeholders.

We therefore call all **young people** around the world to join us in speaking up against violence, social injustices and the climate crisis. We believe in the power, creativity and passion of youth voices to build more dignified, inclusive and peaceful communities for all people and living beings. We urge young people to raise awareness and take action, advocating for collaborative strategies. This will be achieved by working with and listening to our communities, promoting a valued-based and forward-thinking mindset, tackling power divisions and prioritising empowerment and self-learning, building coalitions to promote peace and positive transformation. Embracing deep listening, resource allocation, community research, social communication and volunteering as crucial skills will enable us to contribute significantly to society while unity and the acceptance of diversity should remain fundamental to the foundation of communities.

We remind **stakeholders** of existing positions and models for youth representation at the local, national, and international levels and reiterate our belief that these measures benefit all communities and boost the civil involvement of the youth. However, representation alone is not sufficient. Investing in technical and logistical support is vital for fulfilling our initiatives and our vision for an inclusive and fair future.

We call on **policymakers** to recognise the young people around the world as active subjects of rights and drivers of positive action, and to meaningfully involve youth in decision-making processes to ensure inclusive policies. Civil society should empower all community members as agents of change and address local issues to improve living standards.

Finally, we invite all of **society** to work together so we can achieve meaningful change. Collaboration across sectors is vital for creating safer spaces and promoting resources for vulnerable groups and achieving climate and social justice.

Because we, the #YouthVoices, are the present hope to build a better future.