

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SECOND EDITION OF THE SUB-REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM “YOUTH FOR PEACE” ON PEACE-BUILDING ISSUES IN THE AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION.

Place:Bukavu, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Date: from October 8 to 9, 2024

Participants:70 young women and men from Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC.



Bukavu, October 8-9, 2024

❖ MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the symposium was to reflect on the major issues of peace consolidation and the involvement of young women and men in peace process in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC.

❖ *Specific objectives:*

- Take stock of the socio-economic and security challenges faced by young people which hinder their full participation in peace and security process in their respective countries.
- Share experiences and best practices for peace promotion and reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict contexts.
- Assess the status of the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda and the inclusion of youth civil society organizations and national policies in terms of promoting and mentoring young people.
- Establishing a Youth Network for Peace in the sub-region of the Great lakes,
- Develop a roadmap of activities to promote full participation of young people in the peace process in the sub-region.

❖ RESULTS ACHIEVED.

Result 1. An inventory of the socio-economic and security challenges faced by young people was drawn up.

Through the panel presentations, participants painted a picture of the socio-economic challenges facing young people, including endemic unemployment, political and identity manipulation, tribalism, enlistment in armed groups, disinformation, etc. All these challenges constitute obstacles to the development of youth, sustainable peace and development and push young people to adopt radical and violent behavior.

The young people expressed the wish to see more support mobilized for youth initiatives by governments and technical and financial partners, showing that entrepreneurial initiatives for the economic empowerment and socio-professional reintegration of young people, socio-cultural initiatives that can contribute to the resilience of young people do not often benefit from the attention of investors, partners and governments when it comes to peace initiatives in the Great Lakes sub-region.

Thus, young people felt forgotten and abandoned, even though they are important actors in conflict prevention, peace building and peace consolidation at all levels.

Result 2. Experiences and best practices were shared between young people from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Living in a region marked by repeated conflicts as well as post-election political crises, young people from three countries shared their experiences and best practices for the culture of peace, non-violence, resilience and reconciliation based on different socio-historical moments and facts that have mourned the region, including the genocide committed against the Tutsis in Rwanda, the various civil wars and political conflicts in Burundi as well as the wars of aggression in the

East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The young people committed to being actors of peace and change in order to prevent conflicts, to build a sub-regional identity that guarantees cohesion and socio-economic and political stability in their respective countries in particular and in the Great Lakes sub-region in general.

Outcome 3. A brief assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda.

Adopted in 2015, Resolution 2250 and related resolutions have become key instruments for promoting youth participation in the peace and security process. The UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, which is based on these resolutions, provides an opportunity for governments to make the voices of young people heard and involve them in peace processes. In the Great Lakes sub-region, while some initiatives are being implemented by governments and youth civil society organizations, they remain insufficient and other measures taken suffer from implementation and/or lack of support. In the DRC, for example, since 2022, the country has had a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, but since then, no measures have been taken to implement the said plan. It remains a plan on paper without concrete actions on the ground.

However, civil society youth associations have set up a Youth, Peace and Security Coalition, which is a mega platform of youth organizations working for peace and security in the country and continuing advocacy for accelerated implementation of the NAP as well as organizing several activities to popularize resolution 2250 and other related resolutions. In Burundi, the government has launched since 2023 the process of developing a roadmap to equip itself with a national action plan and continue the initiatives already undertaken by the government and civil society youth organizations on the JPS agenda. In Rwanda, there is no government initiative in this direction. However, Rwandan youth associations participate in activities organized by other young people in the sub-region and the continent and are increasingly inspired to start something in their country.

Result 3. The development of a roadmap of activities to promote the full participation of young people in the peace process in the sub-region has been carried out (see annex).

Based on the various challenges identified by young people and experts who took part in the Symposium and given the urgency of providing innovative solutions to the socio-economic problems that hinder the development of young people, pushing them to adopt violent radical behavior, a roadmap was developed. The activities planned to be carried out over a period of 5 years, from 2024 to 2029, are divided into four themes and aim to promote the:

- sub-regional identity through social cohesion
- free movement of people and goods and cross-border youth entrepreneurship,
- implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda,
- Action Research.

Result 4. A youth network called Youth Network for Peace in the Great Lakes sub-region (RJP-GL) was officially launched.

The Network constitutes a framework for exchange, reflection, work, research and actions and pursues as its main objective, the development of a sub-regional identity among youth, based on socio-cultural cohesion and cooperation, with a view to consolidating peace and effective regional integration.

The mission of the network is to coordinate the efforts of young people in the sub-region for the promotion of the culture of peace and the successful integration of the peoples of the sub-region.

❖ CONCLUSION

This event organized by the consortium of youth civil society organizations from Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC including Youth for Peace DRC in collaboration with the Organizational Innovation Network (RIO/ECC) benefited from the support of the Peace and Reconciliation Project of the community of fathers of Schoenstatt Mont Sion Gikungu, the University of Burundi and the University of Fribourg (Caritas Studies) financed by the State of Baden-Württemberg, the Archdiocese of Fribourg and the Diocese of Baden-Württemberg.

