EU YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY NETWORK

FINAL PARTICIPATION REPORT

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EVENT	**European Union Community of Practice 26: Peace Mediation in the Age of Power Politics**
DATES	**20-21 October**
LOCATION	Brussels, Belgium
ROLE	EU YPS Network Regional Coordinator for Central Africa

THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

A CALL TO DECISION-MAKERS

Young people must not be treated merely as beneficiaries of decisions made for them without them. They are ready to co-create solutions and contribute to the development of their communities.

I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OPENING REFLECTION

I am sincerely grateful for the invitation to attend the EU CoP26 Community of Practice and for the professionalism, care and commitment shown by the organizers throughout the entire process . I valued the organization of the sessions as a whole and the support that enabled me to participate in Brussels.

The journey did not proceed without difficulty. After my appointment at TLSContact in Nairobi, my flight from Nairobi to Kigali was cancelled and used the road transport from Nairobi to Goma. Later, at Kigali airport on 18 October from 19PM, I faced the risk of being unable to onboard; according to Rwanda airlines service that because my return flight had been booked with a different airline(Ethiopian); the carrier was insisting that one airline operates both journeys and I therefore had to book a new ticket. An oral regulation drafted and officially adopted nowhere. I am especially grateful to Mr. Rok of the European External Action Service (EEAS), who supported me through the different steps and intervened at that critical moment. I also thank the organizers for their professonalism from the beginning of my visa process and for arranging accommodation and transport between the airport and the hotel in both directions in very safe way. Their support made a real difference and allowed me to take part in the conference.

The opening speech set a compelling frame for the work ahead. The **EEAS Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs** warned that if we fail to establish peace, coming generations will bear the consequences of our inaction. The call to invest in young people and work jointly to build sustainable peace speaks directly to the purpose of **the EU Youth, Peace and Security Network,** that I represented and to the recommendations in this report.

II. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

I was selected as an EU CoP26 Youth Advisor, representing the European Union Youth, Peace and Security Network (EU YPS Network) as its Regional Coordinator for Central Africa. The event took place in Brussels on 20 and 21 October 2026. At the same time operating on the ground as Deputy National Coordinator for Women for Equal Chances-Congo «WEC-CONGO»non-profit. My contribution draws on this regional responsibility and on my daily and lived experience in Goma and Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where I have experienced the consequences of conflict from my very young age up to now.

My participation aimed to bring the perspectives of young people and communities affected by conflict into peace and security discussions; to examine who has a seat at the table and whose priorities shape peace processes; and to advocate for participation that goes beyond consultation. I also sought to present the work and needs of the EU YPS Network and the barriers facing local and youth-led organizations seeking access to funding in the entire Africa and beyond.

III. DAY1: 20 OCTOBER 2026

1. Reflection session: communities affected by conflict

I was a speaker in the Day 1 Reflection session. Drawing on my experience in Goma, I brought the perspective of people and communities affected by conflict. I invited participants to consider: Who gets a seat at the table? Whose priorities shape the process? What does meaningful participation look like beyond consultation? My central message was that we should invest directly in young people and become co-creators of solutions in their communities rather than being reduced to beneficiaries of decisions made for them without them; they are ready to co-create solutions and contribute to the development of their communities.

2. Session: Engaging Non-State Actors in Complex Regional Environments: Lessons from Iraq and Lebanon

Mr.Shokri, Country Director of Geneva Call in Iraq, shared stories from his context that I found resonant with the realities of Eastern DRC and the Great Lakes Region. He described a unilateral declaration signed by armed groups as a means of committing to stop atrocities as one among the results from their actions on the ground. He discussed neutrality in engagement with armed groups, recognizing that behaviour does not change immediately, and called for humanitarian mediation, political mediation and stronger respect for International Humanitarian Law.

Sharstan Balo from House of Coexistence organisation highlighted the prevalence of hate speech and the risk that, if it is left unaddressed, it may contribute over time to escalating violence, including the danger of genocidal violence. I found this warning deeply relevant to Eastern DRC with the prevalence of hate speech in a multicultural area like the entire part. The session reinforced the importance of principled engagement, sustained mediation and timely humanitarian action to prevent abuses and reduce the conditions in which violence can grow.

3.Session: Critical minerals and border conflict in Colombia-engaing non-state armed actors through environmental peacemaking

This session on critical minerals and border conflict in Colombia, focused on engaging non-state armed actors through environmental peacemaking. It broadened the discussion of peacebuilding to include the environmental and resource dimensions of conflict, and the potential for environmental approaches to support engagement and peace efforts.

IV. DAY TWO: 21 OCTOBER

SESSIONS ATTENDED

1. Our session: From local peace to political peace

I spoke in Room 201 under the topic: "From Local Peace to Political Peace: How Community Mediation Strengthens the Credibility of Track 1 Peace Processes in the Great Lakes Region." I raised a central concern: armed groups can recruit young people faster than peace processes include them. This makes it urgent to ask what concrete offer the Doha process, the Washington process or the African Union is making to a young person in eastern DRC in Goma, Bukavu or Bunia and the neighboring areas.

My position was that agreements risk remaining politically significant but socially remote when young people cannot see a credible place for themselves in the process or a tangible path from agreement to everyday security, opportunity and influence. Their value cannot be measured only by signatures, announcements or diplomatic visibility. Without local mechanisms and youth participation in implementation, high-level agreements risk being disconnected from the communities whose lives they are meant to change. Community mediation can connect Track 1 commitments to local legitimacy, lived realities and practical follow-through.

2. Advancing Peace Mediation in an Unpredictable World

Masaak Saito, Director of the International Peace Mediation Unit in Japan, emphasized that a peace agreement alone is not enough to secure sustainable peace; **collaboration** among government, NGOs and academia remains essential. **Dr. Babatunde from the ECOWAS** stressed the importance of a Peace Fund mechanism. **Charlotta Sparre**, **Deputy Director of SIPRI,** urged organizations and

institutions to collaborate rather than compete in pursuit of sustainable solutions. These contributions underscored the need for long-term coordination, financing and shared learning beyond the negotiation table.

3. Women's inclusion, historical knowledge and deal-making

In a session featuring **Ambassador Liberata Mulamula , AU Special Envoy Women, Peace and Security** the importance of women's inclusion in peace efforts was emphasized. **Mr. Saîd Djinnit** noted that limited knowledge of a country's history and previous regimes can constrain peace processes and weaken continuity with earlier efforts. **Johan Borgstam, EUSR Great Lakes Region** raised the importance of understanding deals and distinguishing political rhetoric of Americans from political realities when assessing deal-making. Taken together, these contributions point to the value of inclusive processes, historical awareness and careful scrutiny of what political commitments mean in practice.

4. Transitional Justice in Sudan

The session on transitional justice in Sudan, where PA-X peace agreement resources were mentioned. The discussion highlighted the relevance of documenting agreements and commitments when analysing peace processes. Documentation can support analysis of what has been agreed, but it cannot by itself guarantee implementation, accountability or justice. Transitional justice requires sustained attention to victims' experiences and to the political and institutional conditions needed to carry commitments forward.

V. MEETINGS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the event sessions, I met with some organizations at their offices. These conversations provided an opportunity to introduce the **EU YPS Network**, and **Women for Equal Chances-Congo «WEC-CONGO» non-profit in Goma**, to share the work we are doing to their organizations, and explore areas of potential connection. The meetings were encouraging: interlocutors expressed strong interest in the network's work and that of WEC-CONGO non-profit and appreciation for the commitment and initiative of its young members.

1. Plan International: 19 October

At Plan International's office, I introduced the work of the EU YPS Network and its youth-led, regionally grounded initiatives. The team showed strong interest and asked me to share the concept note for one of the network's labelled projects so they could review it and consider where it might be suggested or supported. This was a valuable opening to bring a concrete youth-led proposal into a wider partnership conversation.

2. Search for Common Ground : 22 October

At Search for Common Ground's office, we discussed the network's work and the importance of strengthening links with local peacebuilding actors. Search for Common Ground via Saji Prelis had previously provided the EU YPS Network with a seven-session online training on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 and the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. That training had been of great importance to the network. During this meeting, they offered to connect us with their office in DRC, creating a practical opportunity to deepen local engagement and collaboration.

3. Bahá'í International Community: 22 October

At the Bahá'í International Community's office, I presented the network's work with young people and its commitment to youth participation in peacebuilding. The exchange was an opportunity to discuss the value of inclusive, community-rooted approaches and to make the network's regional work more visible. I was encouraged by the interest and appreciation shown for the initiative and commitment of the young people involved.

4. EURAC: 22 October

At EURAC, a European advocacy network available in 30 countries today, I introduced the EU YPS Network's regional reach, youth-led initiatives and priorities in Central Africa. The conversation highlighted the importance of ensuring that young people's experience and proposals are visible in advocacy and policy discussions. The meeting offered a useful opportunity to connect a youth-led network with an established advocacy space and to draw attention to the value of the work already being carried out by young people.

VI. THE EU YPS NETWORK: REACH, WORK AND NEEDS

The EU YPS Network works intensively with young people and their organizations across six regions, including Central Africa, Asia and Middle East, Eastern and Southern, Latin Americawhich I coordinate. More than 700 young people remain connected, engaged and ready to act. Each region has developed labelled projects supported by promising concept notes. This represents a significant base for collective action, but the network's direct presence on the ground remains less visible than its engagement and readiness would suggest because many initiatives lack the funding needed for implementation.

Youth-led organizations need access to grants that enable them to co-create and deliver solutions locally. Administrative processes should be more accessible without compromising rigorous due diligence or accountability. Technical assistance from larger organizations is also valuable: it can strengthen project design, financial management, monitoring and delivery. Such assistance should reinforce; not replace, the leadership and decision-making of young people and local organizations.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

1. Recognize and engage the EU YPS Network as a strategic youth partner

Create a regular, structured channel for the Commission to hear from the Network's six regions and its 700-plus engaged young people. Involve youth-led organizations early in policy design, mediation support and programme implementation-not only as consultees or beneficiaries.

2. Establish accessible direct funding for youth-led and local organizations

Simplify and proportion application and reporting requirements to organizational capacity, while maintaining safeguards, transparency and accountability. Create direct-grant pathways that allow local organizations to lead, rather than limiting them to implementation roles under larger intermediaries.

3. Fund the transition from regional concept notes to action

Develop a dedicated funding window or pilot mechanism to help promising regional concept notes from the EU YPS Network become locally led projects. Provide appropriately sized, predictable support so young people can test, adapt and scale solutions rooted in their communities.

4. Pair funding with technical assistance that protects youth leadership

Enable larger organizations to provide mentorship and technical assistance on project design, financial management, safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation. Structure such partnerships so that youth-led organizations retain decision-making authority, visibility and direct access to resources.

5. Extend meaningful support to conflict-affected and under-served areas

Review the geographic coverage of EU youth programmes and networks, including the EU Youth Lab, other EU and AU-funded youth programmes, and expand access to conflict-affected contexts currently left out, including the DRC. Connect support to local mediation and peacebuilding, women's inclusion and the implementation of peace commitments that young people can see and shape.This would enable young people closest to conflict to move locally developed concepts from consultation to implementation and co-create responses grounded in community realities.

6. Support safer, better-regulated cross-border transport across Africa

The European Commission should work with the African Union, and other instituions; regional economic communities, national governments and transport regulators to strengthen coordination and common standards for cross-border air and land transport. Priorities should include clear passenger protections for cancellations, rebooking and refunds; better coordination among carriers and routes; predictable cross-border procedures; and safe, reliable alternatives when disruptions occur. EU and AU cooperation and investment should also support affordable, dependable connections to conflict-affected and underserved regions. Stronger regional transport systems are essential for humanitarian response, peacebuilding, economic opportunity and young people's ability to participate in regional programmes and decision-making.

VIII. IMMEDIATE FOLLOW-UP PROPOSALS

- Share the relevant labelled-project concept note with Plan International for review and possible referral to an appropriate opportunity.
- Follow up with Search for Common Ground on the proposed connection with its Goma office and explore a practical point of contact for the network.

- Prepare a concise portfolio of the network's six regional concept notes and present it to the European Commission and potential partners in support of direct funding and technical assistance.

CONCLUSION

The conference and partner meetings affirmed both the urgency and the possibility of a more meaningful role for young people in peacebuilding. The opening message was clear: future generations will bear the cost of our failure to establish peace. Across mediation, Track 1 processes, transitional justice and local peacebuilding, the test is whether people especially young people in conflict-affected communities can influence decisions and experience their benefits.

The EU YPS Network is not short of commitment, ideas or young people ready to act. It connects more than 700 young people across six regions, and its regional projects are already developed. What is missing is the consistent access to funding, institutional attention and practical support needed to bring these projects to life. Investing in the Network and its youth-led organizations is an investment in locally grounded, collaborative and sustainable peace. Young people should not wait outside the room while decisions are made about their future: they are ready to cocreate solutions for a very equal and just future.