



## **Introduction**

Throughout its existence since 1993, [CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation](#) has had a long-standing commitment to promoting the role of young people in civil society organisations – not only in supporting youth organisations, but also in promoting young people’s roles in wider global policy and development discussions. CIVICUS recognises that children and young people play a key role in confronting the vast challenges facing civil society, now and in the future. Yet, the voices of young people are seldom heard in decision-making processes and public deliberation.

It is CIVICUS’ position that any initiative aimed at strengthening the role of young people must recognise the need for integration, while also ensuring dedicated resources for actively progressing young people’s participation and empowerment. It is vital that attempts to develop support for young people within civil society do not lead to further isolation, but actively connect young people and youth organizations to wider initiatives and civil society deliberations.

## **Background**

With these principles in mind, CIVICUS organized the first ever Youth Assembly (YA) in 2007 in Glasgow. At the closing plenary of the 2007 CIVICUS World Assembly, youth participants made a ‘call for intergenerational collaboration’ asking CIVICUS and World Assembly delegates to consider how they might amplify the voices of young people, strengthen youth involvement in civil society and work alongside today’s generation to affect lasting change. The entire World Assembly delegation (over 750 leaders from 119 countries) stood up in response to the call, pledging to support young people, acting in their own growing spheres of influence.

Since then, successful Youth Assemblies have been held in 2008 (Glasgow), 2010, 2011, [2012 \(Montreal\)](#), [2014 \(Johannesburg\)](#) and [2016 \(Bogota\)](#). The Youth Assembly is now an established global space for strengthening youth participation in civil society discussions. With participants from civil society, social movements, social enterprises, government and international institutions, the CIVICUS World and Youth Assemblies have become a unique opportunity for young change-makers to influence decision-makers, as well as learn from each other and strengthen their own capacity and networks.

*The CIVICUS Youth Assembly is a leading international networking forum and meeting for young people and young civil society.*

*They engage with international peers and prominent civil society actors, while examining and taking action on some of the critical challenges facing the world.*

*The YA also acts as a preparatory space to enable young people to make an impact at International Civil Society Week and the CIVICUS World Assembly.*

## **CIVICUS Youth Assembly 2017**

In collaboration with diversity of youth organisations, the 2017 Youth Assembly will provide [CIVICUS youth working group members](#) (young active citizens and youth organisations) and others with an opportunity to organise and create networks between themselves, as well to collect their voices to understand the needs of young people in the Pacific and Small Islands in particular and the barriers young people face from participating in society around the world.

The Youth Assembly 2017 is a forum to exchange good practices for high-impact civic engagement; fortify collaboration and forge new partnerships; and build strategic and technical capacity for the future generation of activists. The Youth Assembly recommendations will contribute to the action plan and agenda setting of CIVICUS Youth Working Group for the next 18 months.

The goals of YA 2017 are to:

1. **Connect** a diversity of youth practitioners and leaders who are challenging threats that youth organisations and movement face, and develop recommendations together for moving forward to create positive impact in society
2. **Share** knowledge and skills that some organisations use to promote, strength and advance youth civic engagement and civic space through peer-learning;
3. **Initiate** conversations on ways to tackle inequality and climate change in view of the Paris Agreement through youth mobilisation and develop youth-centred strategies and commitments for the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

**Structure:** Young people will participate in workshops, peer-mentorship exchanges and open conversations to foster partnership, capacity development and knowledge sharing on youth civic engagement challenges in different regions, all aimed at preparing them to fully engage in the rest of International Civil Society Week and wider civil society initiatives. The Youth Assembly 2017 will follow a World Café Methodology and ICSW Event Principles of inclusion, participation, accountability, diversity, transparency and sustainability.

**Deliverable:** At the YA 2014 Rustler's Youth Retreat, delegates produced a [Statement](#), outlining several key topics for civil society to focus on and fight for, including: eliminating discrimination based on race, gender and sexual orientation, democratization of CSOs and power structures, and rethinking relationships between civil society and donor organisations, grassroots and NGOs. In 2016 [Bogota Youth Declaration](#), called civil society leaders and practitioners to recognize and meaningfully include youth in peacebuilding and decision-making spaces.

YA 2017 will build on these key ideas of democratisation, peacebuilding and youth inclusion regardless of race, sexual orientation, origin; and on their role in implementing the SDGs, particularly on initiatives and commitments to achieve the SDG 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" and SDG 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts." These topics are important given the leading role of Fiji at the UN Oceans Conference and the COP 23.



*"Young people will be the torchbearers of the next sustainable development agenda through 2030"*

*– UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon (Post-2015 Synthesis Report)*



**Mentoring:** In addition to the official [CIVICUS Mentorship Programme](#) launched in March 2017, the ICSW will offer delegates the opportunity of learning from experienced civil society activists through peer-mentoring and experience sharing for youth to be in a position to stimulate new thinking and ideas in order to effect a paradigm shift in the civil society sector. ICSW Mentorship opportunities will be led by the Youth Working Group where all delegates interested in this initiative will be matched days before the conference with another delegate.

