Speech foreign affairs 04.11.2026

Youth Peace Summit 2026

Distinguished representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Peace is often discussed by those who hold power. But its future belongs to those who will inherit the world we shape today.

I stand before you on behalf of 140 young people from 61 countries who came together to attend and organise the Youth Peace Summit 2026 in the Hague. Our participants came from all over the globe, including conflict areas such as Ukraine, South Korea, Latin America and Northern Ireland. We arrived with different backgrounds, different experiences, different perspectives, and sometimes very different understandings of peace. Some of us have experienced conflict firsthand. Others have grown up in peaceful societies but see the growing divisions around them. Yet, despite our differences, we came together with one shared conviction:

Peace is not something we can afford to wait for. It is something we must actively build and maintain.

Over three days, young local and international people and partners did not simply discuss the challenges facing our world. We listened, challenged one another, shared experiences, and worked together to develop concrete ideas for a more peaceful future. Nobody in these rooms said, "Someone should do something.” Everyone said, "What can we do and which is the best way to do it ?" The result was 34 proposals and the Youth Peace Charter that I have the privilege of presenting to you today. But this Charter is more than a collection of ideas.

It is a commitment from young people to take responsibility for the future we want to live in. It is a promise that we can solve problems together.

And it is also an invitation to those who have the power to turn ideas into action. Because too often, young people are invited to speak about the future without being included in the decisions that shape it. We are told that we are the leaders of tomorrow.

But the challenges we face are happening today.

War does not wait. Climate change does not wait. Polarisation does not wait. And neither should meaningful youth participation. You can see that young people want this, from the student protests happening across Europe right now. We are not asking to replace the experience of diplomats, policymakers or political leaders. We are asking to combine that experience with the perspectives, creativity and determination of a generation that will live with the consequences of today's decisions. We strongly believe that the quiet foundation on which every lasting peace is built is empathy and the youth. We believe that peace begins with dialogue. But dialogue alone is not enough if it does not lead to action.

That is why we are here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Netherlands, and The Hague in particular, have a unique role in international peace and justice. But being the city of peace and justice is not only about the institutions we host. It is also about the values we put into practice.

And one of those values must be ensuring that young people are not merely heard, but meaningfully involved.

So today, we ask you for three things:

First, recognise young people as partners in peacebuilding, not simply as beneficiaries of policies designed by others.

Second, create meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to diplomacy, conflict prevention and international decision-making.

And third, help turn the ideas contained in this Charter into concrete action through cooperation between young people, governments and civil society.

You will find these demands in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. The commitment already exists. We are asking for it to be put into practice. Young people are not a threat to peace, we are existential for it and without us it can not be discussed.

We know that a Charter alone cannot bring peace. But it can start conversations. A conversation about prevention and action is wiser than a reaction, a conversation about safety and security goes hand in hand with that.It can challenge assumptions. It can inspire cooperation. And, most importantly, it can serve as a starting point for action.

Today, we are not simply handing over a document. We are extending a hand.

A hand of cooperation, responsibility and shared ambition. And we hope that you will take it. Because peace cannot be built by one generation alone. It requires all of us.

On behalf of the participants and organisers of the Youth Peace Summit 2026, it is my privilege and honor to officially present the Youth Peace Charter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

And I would like to leave you with the words that guide our work:

Young people do not await peace. They build it.

Thank you .