

*Melaka Youth Declaration on
A Global Youth Partnership to End Child Marriage*

We, the youth delegates that have gathered here today at the **International Conference on Child Marriage: “Strength in Unity, Girls are Not Brides – A Global Youth Partnership to End Child Marriage”** held from 19th to 23rd May 2016 in Melaka, Malaysia, organized by World Youth Foundation, to address the issue of Child Marriage have agreed that the role of young people in bringing an end to the issue is crucial. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the global issue of Child Marriage and stand in solidarity with all those affected by it.

In September of 2015, the United Nations hosted its 70th General Assembly to adopt the ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognizing that this agenda must be underpinned by equally ambitious and credible means of implementation, we have come together to establish a holistic, forward-looking and practical framework for concrete actions to deliver on the promise of this agenda.

Keeping the SDGs in mind, we recognize our task to be threefold: **to increase** awareness about Child Marriage, **to prevent** Child Marriage and protect existing population of Child Brides, and **to create** an ecosystem to support collective and global youth actions. Solutions can be found in actions promoting Education, Gender Equality and Partnerships, namely under SDG 4, SDG 5 and SDG 17 respectively.

We **recognize** that effective public policies, regulatory frameworks and appropriate incentives, are essential for ensuring success, and also reaffirm the importance of freedom, peace and security, good governance, rule of law, combatting corruption, sound economic policies and solid democratic institutions at the sub-national, national and international levels.

We **reaffirm** that achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is essential to bring an end to Child Marriage. We also recognize the needs of women who are child brides and pledge to implement concrete steps to address their developmental, health, and economic needs.

We **recognize** the needs and challenges faced by countries in special situations, including least developed countries (LDCs), countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as the specific challenges facing the middle-income countries that act as a major contributing factor in child marriages.

In dealing with the problem of child marriage which is an issue faced by different regions of the world, we recognize that solutions must be formulated and executed in collaboration and active participation with the youth of these regions. In this regard, our brothers and sisters from Africa and Asia pledge their total commitment to advocate and pilot the declaration amongst their peers.

We **pledge** to support individuals currently or previously affected by the issue of child marriage and agree to galvanize support for the implementation of relevant strategies, policies and programmes of action, as well as a two (2) year Action Plan, with an initial pilot of three months to be carried forward progressively as a strategic framework for ensuring positive and socioeconomic transformation.

Recognizing that the global youth population of over 1.8 billion are within the age bracket of 12-24 years, and as the UN Secretary General H.E Ban Ki Moon rightly said, *“We have never been younger”*. We therefore firmly believe that in *every generation, young people have always made a difference in building a better world and we re-emphasize their capacity to lead and make sustainable contributions.*

As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that we the youth of 22 countries will intensify our collective efforts in addressing the issue of child marriage in our respective constituencies.

We also recognize and deeply appreciate the role played by the **World Youth Foundation** as hosts of the conference, and recognize them as partners in progress towards the realization of the action plan.

Keeping the spirits, intentions and commitments in mind we hereby pledge to undertake our Action Plan, and make speedy progress towards achieving the aspirations listed above.

Signed by delegates of the **International Conference on Child Marriage: “Strength in Unity, Girls are Not Brides – A Global Youth Partnership to End Child Marriage”**.

Melaka, Malaysia, 23rd May 2016

Annex:

1. Youth Action Plan