

The Republic of the Niger

Positions for the General Assembly Plenary

I. The Role of Youth in Utilizing Media to Promote a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence

Youth are the future of the world. Media is the main means of mass communication worldwide, and a culture of peace is what Niger is looking toward. Youth violence is the 4th leading cause of death in young people worldwide, with 200,000 **dying** a year. Though the assistance of media, there could be a decline in youth violence. Countries struggling with poverty are more likely to experience youth violence first. On a GDP ranking scale of 194 countries, 1 being the poorest and 194 being the richest, Niger is ranked at 7. For the **12.5 million** children under 18 years of age within Niger, childhood is a strenuous journey. The average age of a Nigerien is 15 years. Youth face daily stumbling blocks such as Boko Haram, who is a consistent threat in the country by kidnapping and murdering of citizens for their beliefs. Youth also struggle with low school attendance, harmful practices such as early marriage and Niger's situations only appear to be worsening.

With a secure youth demographic, over half of Niger's population is under the age of 18 years old. Niger has implemented a project of peace between three regions: Zinder, Diffa and Tahoua. The peace project being implemented is risky due to the Nigerien regions' youth population being vulnerable to violent mobilization and recruitment into various armed groups. Eastern Niger struggles with restricted resources, South-Western Tahoua is threatened by the massive return of combatants from Libya and Mali, and Zinder faces youth violence from **gang-affiliated** organizations. The peace project unified the Support Network for Local Initiatives and began working with the USIP (United States Institute of Peace) to convene a broad band of community figures, such as elders, religious and traditional leaders, women and youth representatives, along with local governmental officials to communicate. These groups never spoke to one another, so this gave the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and opinions. While hostility was a factor in the beginning, citizens eased up over coffee breaks and began forming relationships.

There have been solutions managed to minimize violence and maximize a youth promoting culture and peace. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) is utilizing education as a tool of peace. The idea that education prevents a generation from losing hope **encourages** the youth. Schooling can serve as an influence to youth on how to construct peace and nonviolent culture within the region. The continual growth of education can result in a positive impact by decreasing violence within Niger's regions. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) joined to create a global movement for fostering the culture of peace and non-violence worldwide, with a goal to strengthen through education, advocacy and media, including ICTs (Information and Communication Technology) and social networks. More solutions that have been practiced are trainings in conflict transformation and youth leadership, support for mediation groups, support for community activities and strengthening the capacity of local radios to be a voice for peace. Support groups have emerged to create a day declared November 20th as World Children's Day, where children allow their voices to be heard and shed light on issues affecting them. Youth have the opportunity to state experiences and what can further be done to improve their standard of living. With this media tool, Nigeriens have developed the use of heritage and contemporary creativity as tools for constructing peace through dialogue. All these motions have come together to create a better environment for Niger. Niger has provided positive steps in the right direction, but the more it is implemented, the better the improvements will be. Violence will decrease and children will have more support through media and the awareness and the educational methods it spreads.

II. Establishing Internet as a Critical Infrastructure in Developing Member States

During the summer of 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council approved the addition of Article 19 to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declared internet access as a human right instead of a luxury. It focused less on a governmental responsibility to provide internet access, and more on preventing it from being taken away from citizens. Establishing reliable internet should be a priority for all developing nations, as the establishment of internet can be used to boost a nation's economy, such as by creating new jobs in the information sector. As stated by the World Bank, if all developing countries were to increase the percentage of citizens with internet access to 75%, as much as \$2trillion USD could be added to their national gross domestic product (GDP) and more than 140 million jobs would be created worldwide. The internet is also a major channel of information. Access to political information can be crucial in countries like Niger, that have only recently become democratic regimes, especially in terms of electing candidates that will further the nations' international relations. With strong international relations, Niger can gain the upper hand when dealing with international security threats, like Boko Haram, as well as benefit economically, in terms of trade opportunities. If properly utilized, the internet could substantially raise the standard of living for those living in developing nations.

Niger recognizes both the potential benefits of accessing the internet and the issues that prevent it from fully establishing internet as a critical infrastructure. One especially difficult challenge is in the population distribution of Niger. In the Republic of Niger, roughly 94% of the country's population lives on approximately 34% of the land. The Maradi region holds 20% of the country's population on 3.3% of the land, whereas only 3% of the country's population lives in the desert and mountainous region of the north, which makes up 53% of the land. Another difficulty Niger faces lies in the fact that, as of 2019, only 18.775% of Nigeriens had access to electricity. Niger's technological deficiency combined with the fact that over 80% of Niger's land is covered by the Sahara Desert, there are significant barriers to establishing reliable internet throughout the country. Niger is working to overcome those challenges with the help of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and other international organizations. Niger's National Agency for Information Society (ANSI) received a €700,000 grant from the AFD in 2019 to support Niger's transition to an online administration and the creation of an official website that provides administrative services to citizens. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNICEF selected Niger for the Giga Initiative, which aims to bring internet connectivity to schools across Niger to increase educational opportunities for Niger's youth. Niger was selected due to its information and communications technology (ICT) policy that improved access to internet throughout the country, the Smart Village Project. The Smart Village Project aims to connect over 15,000 rural villages across the country to promote universal access to the internet. The Smart Villages project sets up a satellite dish and a router in each village and then distributes tools like tablets, projectors, and educational books with pre-recorded messages in native languages to villagers. The project also established a platform that supports various messaging platforms so experts can share advice on health practices, agricultural practices, educational content, and emergency alerts with villagers. This project is receiving aid from various UN agencies, like the ITU and the World Health Organization, the Université Numérique Francophone Mondiale, and Terre des Hommes, among other organizations.

Despite the progress Niger has made thus far, there is still much to be done. Niger believes that the **best** course of action for **all** developing nations is to increase access to the internet for all citizens. In order to achieve this, Niger believes that the UN should pass a resolution establishing UN Connect, a subsidiary body of the UN Development Program (UNDP) that will oversee the establishment of internet in developing nations, as well as provide expert advice and financial aid to states if need be. UN Connect could also appeal to developed nations, offering access to new markets and the opportunity to create economic and diplomatic footholds throughout the world. Much like Niger's Smart Village projects, UN Connect would provide not only internet access, but also information that could drastically improve the quality of life for citizens in developing countries.