Youth and Peace Building in the Digital Age

Political parties in South Asia, as in many other regions, are dominated by leaders who often resist the entry of youth in higher levels of party hierarchy. It is, therefore, relevant to explore the perspectives of educated youth, especially of Pakistan, connected to social networks, as well as those from less privileged social backgrounds, who are frequently exposed to new ideas that escape the attention of their elders. It is also important to see if young women are able to navigate their way in mainstream political parties.

With higher levels of literacy, connectivity and access to information the aspirations of youth are often different from veteran politicians. Youth-led initiatives in the region have demonstrated how access to digital technologies and social media can disrupt traditional ways of thinking and governance. But for these peace-seeking innovative ideas to be up-scaled, youth needs to be given a voice in democratic institutions, including national and sub-national parliaments where they can see how their thinking could ultimately be transformed into legislation that encourages diversity and mitigates inequality. A reform of political parties and their governance also is only possible if the younger breed of politicians are ultimately empowered to initiate a debate on the floor regarding representation of marginalised. In view of the above, this session will look at how the following can be undertaken:

- Ensuring active and safe participation of youth in political and public spaces.
- Integrating youth perspectives in the overall debate around reform of political parties in Pakistan.
- Possible youth-led legislation which can ultimately pave way for effective representation of women and those from the marginalised communities.
- Learning from other South Asian countries and beyond regarding this subject matter.

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