# Future of Regional Narrative Building in Northeast Asia: Policy Recipes by Youth Peacebuilders

Futuring peace in Northeast Asia is an initiative by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA) co-designed by youth peacebuilders from China, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea. It is dedicated to strengthening opportunities for Northeast Asian youth to share their unique observations for regional peace and security and amplify their capacity to be at the forefront of regional discussions, as a step towards broader representation of youth in high-level policy fora in line with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on Youth, Peace and Security.

With the objective to develop concrete policy recommendations, a group of youth utilized strategic foresight tools to explore pathways to a peaceful future for the region. They examined a set of future scenarios in the context of 2040 - imagining how education, new technologies and innovative approaches could be used to build regional narratives. Through a series of virtual engagements including crowd-sourced inputs from more than 140 regional participants of different ages, **four interrelated areas for policymaking** were identified and developed into a set of recommendations in a youth-drafted policy report. The next phase of Futuring Peace in Northeast Asia will focus on supporting youth peacebuilders to share the recommendations with policymakers in relevant fora regionally and globally, to network and seek ways of implementation. Recommendations include:

**1** **Public-Private Sector Collaboration for Digital Literacy Programs in Northeast Asia** to address the growing presence of hate speech, prejudice, misogyny, and antagonism online and on social media platforms, and enable the creation of safe and inclusive online spaces for regional cultural exchanges:

● Develop in-school digital literacy programs for students: The Ministries of Education and local schools in Northeast Asia should develop digital literacy courses customized to the age and needs of students from kindergarten to university. The content should have a regional focus and include and discuss various aspects of cultures in Northeast Asia, to foster abilities to respect cultural diversity and openness and inclusive mindsets, confidence in sharing one's culture. Social networking services (SNS) and technology suppliers should provide devices, technical support and the latest knowledge on digital platform guidelines, to improve gaming, videos, and metaverse experiences and ensure that schools have the necessary resources to teach digital literacy programs.

● Develop out-of-school digital literacy programs for the public: Civil society organizations (CSOs) and public institutions such as public libraries and community centers are potential sites for regional cultural exchanges and should have a key role in creating a learning space for digital literacy, providing curated content in line with the concept of lifelong learning. SNS and technology suppliers should provide technical support and devices.

● Develop digital space policies for safety and inclusiveness: The Departments of Information and Technology in Northeast Asia and SNS should work together to create robust policies to address and regulate violent online speech and dis- and misinformation while upholding free speech for all users.

**2** **Furthering Educational and Technological Cooperation** for Northeast Asian youth to promote intra-regional dialogues, learning from other cultures and exposure to different perspectives:

● Increase funding for language study abroad programs and regional exchange student programs: Regional Ministries of Education should encourage youth to learn another Northeast Asian language to incentivize youth to access various technological platforms, become less inward-looking and avoid echo chambers. Governments should provide free access or reduced tuition fees and cover the costs of student meals, to incentivize citizens' participation in education and increase the intra-regional flow of Northeast Asian students. Governments should also allocate increased grants for international academic and artistic projects related to Northeast Asian regional identity.

● Increase exchanges through intra-regional forums driven by the private sector: For-profit companies should lead or become crucial participants in regional forums to address the need for bottom-up initiatives for regional cooperation and narrative building. The private sector should also increase funding for regional exchange student programs and compensate for the scarcity of funded scholarships offered by national governments in the region.

● Northeast Asian civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should further their participation in accountability processes and ensure citizens' access to information, by helping to ensure reporters' anonymity, utilize blockchain technologies to protect public records and documents, and establish effective governance within their organizations to diminish corruption in the knowledge society.

**3** **Creation of an independent Northeast Asian Youth Parliament for Climate Action** to allow youth to directly influence environmental policies in the region:

● The Youth Parliament should consist of a team of five elected members between the ages of 18-32 from each country in the region and operate under a rotating presidency.

● International and regional organizations, environmental institutions and political foundations could support the creation and organization of the Youth Parliament by (1) initiating the creation of the Youth Parliament through facilitating dialogue, using their talent pool and convening power; (2) supporting physical spaces for meetings; (3) training potential members in areas such as global citizenship, foreign policy, diplomacy, environmental, economic, and social policy, as well as soft skills such as negotiation, teamwork, and communication, (4) establishing dedicated program(s) within institutions of higher education to prepare young people to be parliamentary members.

● International organizations are encouraged to include members of the Youth Parliament in various dialogues and decision-making spaces with professionals in relevant areas of parliamentary work, and to support youth to visit other regional bodies such as ASEAN, the PIF and the EU to cultivate an enhanced understanding of current trends, opportunities, and challenges.

● <u>Government agencies in Northeast Asia should proactively include the Youth Parliament in consultations, national action plans, and youth leadership measures</u>. To ensure the legitimacy and relevance of the Youth Parliament, national governments are encouraged to maintain open channels of communication and explore different opportunities for collaboration.

● <u>Governments in Northeast Asia should establish a multilateral agreement that recognizes the Youth Parliament, its role, and how the state aims to engage with the youth parliamentarians.</u>

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**Obtaining an inclusive and socially sustainable Metaverse in Northeast Asia** by offering new opportunities to test solutions, enhancing awareness of climate-focused initiatives as well as reimagining the future of learning, while addressing regulatory challenges such as accessibility, interoperability, and privacy:

● <u>Develop Northeast Asian metaverse platforms</u>: While Northeast Asia has been heavily influenced by Western culture, many Northeast Asian countries have world-class technological capabilities. To prevent monopolies and oligopolies, each country in Northeast Asia should foster increased interaction between relevant industries, research institutions, academia, and governments to develop platforms originating from Northeast Asia. Intra-regional cooperation should be actively pursued to accelerate R&D to decentralize power within the metaverse.

● <u>Promote the development of inclusive algorithms that allows for the removal of linguistic and physical barriers:</u> Governments should take steps to collectively develop algorithms for active trans-language information exchanges and measures to prevent excessive filter bubbles and enable the creation of regional narratives to support peaceful relations in Northeast Asia.

● <u>Foster regional collaboration and multi-stakeholders dialogues between the private and public sectors:</u> In the metaverse where the physical and virtual worlds are proximate, people from fields other than the Internet, new technologies and policymaking fields, should be engaged to be heard and consulted, including marginalized communities, youth, people of different social classes, gender and sexuality, and people with disabilities.

● <u>Regulate the metaverse to correct the imbalance of power and conflict of interests between corporations and citizens:</u> The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) could serve as a model for a similar regional initiative in Northeast Asia, which could contribute to inter/intra-regional collaboration and help create regulations correcting the imbalance in the potential conflicts of interest between powerful corporations and citizens.

**The full report is available for download at the UNDPPA website:
dppa.un.org/northeast-asia**

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