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International Youth Day 2026

WANEP-Nigeria Calls for Greater Investment in Youth Leadership for Sustainable Peace and Development

As the global community commemorates **International Youth Day 2026** under the theme "**Different Contexts, Common Aspirations**," the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-Nigeria) joins governments, development partners, civil society organizations, and young people across the world in celebrating the resilience, innovation, and leadership of youth in advancing sustainable peace and development.

This year's theme recognizes that although young people live in diverse social, economic, and political contexts, they share common aspirations for peace, dignity, quality education, meaningful participation, decent work, and a sustainable future. These aspirations remain universal, even as the challenges young people face differ across communities and countries.

In Nigeria, **young persons between the ages 18 – 35 years constitute over 50% of the country's total population.** This target group continues to demonstrate remarkable leadership in peacebuilding, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, climate action, innovation, humanitarian response, and community development. Despite persistent challenges including unemployment, insecurity, inequality, misinformation, and limited opportunities for participation in decision-making young people have consistently shown resilience and a commitment to building stronger, more peaceful communities.

Through its efforts to promote awareness and implementation of the **United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)** and accompanying resolutions, WANEP-Nigeria continues to engage young people as critical partners in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and sustaining peace. Recognizing the importance of higher education institutions as spaces for nurturing future leaders, WANEP-Nigeria has expanded its engagement with universities across Nigeria through awareness campaigns, public lectures, policy dialogues, and strategic partnerships aimed at deepening students' understanding of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

According to the **National Network Coordinator, WANEP-Nigeria** Bridget Osakwe (PhD) *"International Youth Day reminds us that while young people may come from different backgrounds and face different realities, they share common aspirations for peace, opportunity, inclusion, and a better future. Nigeria's young people are already demonstrating leadership in their communities, and it is our collective responsibility to create enabling environments where they can thrive, participate meaningfully in decision-making, and contribute to sustainable peace and development. Investing in young people today is an investment in a more peaceful, resilient, and prosperous Nigeria tomorrow."*

WANEP-Nigeria calls on government institutions, development partners, the private sector, educational institutions, traditional and religious leaders, and civil society organizations to deepen investments in youth leadership, education, innovation, entrepreneurship, and civic participation. Creating inclusive opportunities for young people to influence policies and contribute to national development is critical to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we celebrate International Youth Day 2026, WANEP-Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to working with young people across Nigeria to strengthen peacebuilding efforts, promote dialogue, encourage active citizenship, and build resilient communities where every young person has the opportunity to realize their aspirations.