

# **FOR YOUTH, BY YOUTH**

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

Conscious Leadership and Global  
Solidarity | 16-19 November 2025

*İstanbul Türkiye*



# DAY 1 HIGHLIGHTS



Ashley Melaine Poutum, Harriet Yake Tyobo, and Naome Ayebale

## **Concious Leadership, Global Solidarity, and Radical Inclusion**

Day One began with testimony and presence. Young leaders entering a space built not around hierarchy but around mutual recognition and human dignity.



## Movement-building: Sharing Personal Artifacts

Each participant brought a personal artifact, a small, meaningful object from home to share with a fellow conference attendee. This practice continues a tradition that began at the Boston gathering, where Next Generation Leaders alumni exchanged personal artifacts to connect beyond words. In Istanbul, this ritual was continued as a gesture of friendship and solidarity.



Fri Mercy Koti and Kamvelihle Mapundu

# Opening Plenary: Arriving as a Community

The opening plenary featured the faces and voices of the *For Youth, By Youth* movement, setting the stage for this year's theme: Conscious Leadership and Global Solidarity.

- Next Generation Leaders Alumni Vuthlarhi Shirindza, Paseka Elcort Gaola, and Fri Mercy Koti
- Video Message from Reeta Roy, President and CEO of the Mastercard Foundation
- Talloires Network of Engaged Universities Executive Director Lorlene Hoyt, introduced by Mitiku Hoyt-Rouse
- paNhari co-founders Phil Mlanda, and Mushandi (Donald) Bodzo
- Sabanci University Director of Civic Involvement Projects Office Zeynep Bahar
- *For Youth, By Youth* Inaugural Cohort members Niyana Fikru Amanu and Catherina Dogmo Ngongni Kuetezang
- *Echoes of My Story, Seeds of Glory* Poem by Inaugural Cohort member Diane Mushimiyimana



Fri Mercy Koti



Vuthlarhi Shirindza



Paseka Elcort Gaola



Diane Mushimiyimana



Reeta Roy (video)



Don Bodzo & Phil Mlanda



Mitiku Hoyt-Rouse



Zeynep Bahar



## Centering Youth Voices: Roundtable Discussion Struggles for Justice and Peace in Our World

Moderated by Duaa Mohamed, Mastercard Foundation

A powerful roundtable discussion that brought together voices of marginalized youth from South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—youth whose lives have been shaped by ongoing conflict and displacement. Through their stories, we honor youth resilience, resistance, and the pursuit of justice. As part of our growing global movement for and by conscious young leaders, this session creates space for freedom of expression, shared learning, and collective reflection—centering dignity, humanity, and solidarity in what it means to strive for justice and peace in turbulent times. Participants explored conscious leadership and global solidarity as pathways to understanding our shared struggles for justice and to building a more peaceful and equitable world.



## Storytelling as a Civic Practice

A Storytelling Watch Party wove individual experience with collective imagination. Here, narratives were tools for reshaping meaning, forging empathy, and reconfiguring what leadership looks like in a world longing for compassion, clarity, and courage.

This practice resonates with the movement's focus on storytelling as a fundamental capacity for changemakers.





Anthony Bayansi and Mbali Yolanda Mgulwa

## The First Youth-Written Talloires Network Declaration

A defining moment of Day One was engaging with the youth-authored Talloires Network Declaration on the Future of Higher Education. Participants interpreted the Declaration through dialogue and artistic engagement, embodying the movement's belief in co-creation, shared governance, and collective ownership of ideas.



Lucky Buhlebodwa Geluk and Cameron Keighron

# 2025 Talloires Network Declaration on the Future of Higher Education

*Youth are the faces, minds, and hands of the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities. We are at once the stewards of physical university campuses and a network of virtual spaces for learning and collective action.*

[Read the full Declaration here  
\(English-language version\)](#)

[Spanish-language version](#)





## Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Workshop: Knowledge Created With, Not For

Rather than positioning communities as subjects, YPAR centers young people as co-researchers and knowledge holders, generating insight grounded in lived experience and local context.

Participants reflected on how research, when youth-led, can drive meaningful community change and influence institutions from the ground up.



Samantha Katsande

## DAY 2 HIGHLIGHTS

Day Two of the *For Youth, By Youth* International Conference sparked energy, creativity, and collaboration. Participants delved into reflective plenaries, inclusive workshops, and movement-building activities, culminating in a celebratory closing ceremony at Sabancı University Karaköy Campus.



Beatrice Somuah, Forgive Agbesi, Layefa Gift Ernest,  
and Devotha Ikuzwe



Idrissa Seydou Issaka

## Plenary Provocation Inclusivity as Our Compass: A Guided Reflection led by Women, Indigenous Youth, Displaced Youth, and Youth with Disabilities

Participants were invited to imagine higher education systems where inclusion is not symbolic, but intentional—embedded in how spaces are designed, voices are heard, and leadership is practiced. Through guided conversations, participants shared unmet needs, expectations, and opportunities within their universities and communities grounded in their lived experiences.



Sandra Naikambo, Reem Wehbe, Nour Elyakine  
Kaddeche, and Rinah Marion Namwase

This moment affirmed a core *For Youth, By Youth* principle: equity and inclusion must be built in from the start, not added later.



Deng Kuol Parmena Aguto and Anthony Bayansi



## Youth-led Innovation & Ethical AI: Values Guiding Technology

This session spotlighted how the *For Youth, By Youth* movement is shaping inclusive and ethical AI through innovation, collaboration, and youth leadership. Participants shared three milestone outcomes: the YouthIN AI Mentor Chatbot, the Impact Dashboard, and a Policy Brief on Ethical and Inclusive AI. Together, these tools illustrate how young leaders are transforming ethical principles into practical solutions that promote inclusion, accountability, and social impact.



# CO-CREATING THE MOVEMENT CHARTER:

## Shared Values, Shared Responsibility

Participants came together in guided dialogue to co-create the *For Youth, By Youth* Movement Charter — a shared foundation rooted in collective values, accountability, and belonging. The session clarified how participation translates into meaningful opportunity, aligned the Charter with the Declaration on the Future of Higher Education, and shaped a shared, accessible language that connects community action to institutional and professional pathways.



## Global Culture & Collective Joy: Solidarity in Full Color

Traditional attire, shared languages, and cultural expression transformed the space into a living celebration of global identity.



Rinah Marion Namwase and Amy Eldredge

## CENTERING HEALTH, WELLNESS AND CARE

Amy Eldredge, *For Youth, By Youth* Health and Wellness Coach, has provided steady support grounded in practices of health, wellness, and care. Her presence helped create spaces of emotional safety, reflection, and balance—affirming that sustainable youth leadership begins with well-being.



# ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

## Sign Language Interpretation

The conference was designed with inclusion at its core. Sign language interpretation supported full participation throughout the gathering, provided by Micheal Emong, Ugandan Sign Language Interpreter (Uganda), Hope Nyamwiza, Ugandan Sign Language Interpreter (Uganda), and Nicholas Arthur-Baidoo, Ghanaian Sign Language Interpreter, Ashesi University (Ghana). Their work affirmed the movement's commitment to accessibility, dignity, and belonging.

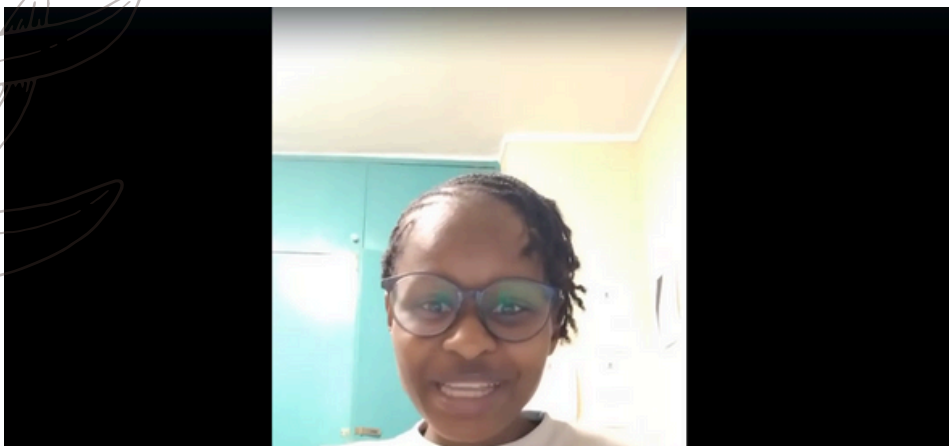


# CHAMPIONING GLOBAL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Sabanci University's  
Pivotal Role supporting  
the *For Youth, By Youth*  
International Conference



Through its Civic Involvement Projects (CIP) Office, the university provided essential institutional backing that enabled the conference to run seamlessly. Their student leaders actively facilitated team-building sessions, cross-cultural exchanges, and Solidarity Chain commitments, creating spaces for connection, reflection, and collaboration. This proactive engagement highlighted Sabanci University's commitment to youth leadership, civic participation, and fostering global solidarity, making a lasting contribution to the success of the conference.



Catherina Dogmo Ngongni Kuetezang



Niyana Fikru Amanu

# **RADICAL INCLUSION**

## **Overcoming Barriers to Participation**

Upholding our commitment to radical inclusion, key members of the inaugural cohort and movement architects who could not travel to Istanbul joined remotely from Ghana, South Africa, Scotland, Lebanon, Uganda, and the United States with support of Patrovas Gabriel Okidi (Next Generation Leaders Alum, Uganda) who helped ensure the virtual conference was seamless. Through the creation of “The Radicals” group, their voices were fully integrated into the conference, reinforcing that the movement transcends physical spaces and that inclusive participation is central to our collective impact.



Vice Rector Cem Güneri, Sabancı University



Zeynep Bahar, Sabancı University



Duaa Mohamed, Mastercard Foundation

## Closing Ceremony: Commitment Beyond the Conference

The event culminated in a closing ceremony at Sabancı University's Karaköy Campus, honoring the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sabancı University, the 20-year legacy of the Talloires Network and the *For Youth, By Youth* movement.

The 2025 Talloires Network Declaration was formally enacted, followed by the creation of a Solidarity Chain—each participant offering a personal or collective commitment to carry forward into their communities and institutions. This moment transformed reflection into responsibility.



Lorlene Hoyt, Talloires Network



## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

**This transformative event sparked conversations on conscious leadership, global solidarity, and driving inclusive change. Through storytelling and hands-on workshops, I gained invaluable insights into diverse cultures and innovative youth-led projects that are shaping the future.**

**Grateful for the connections, insights, and the reminder that together, we can shape a more inclusive future. Let's keep pushing boundaries and building a more equitable world!**

”

**-Layefa G. Ernest, Inaugural Cohort Member, Scotland**

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

It was such an amazing and wonderful gathering of young professional leaders who are more into action than words. Youth for change. There is nothing for us without us. We are the change makers. Youth for a better world.

”

–Rinah M. Namwase, Inaugural Cohort Member,  
Uganda

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

Attending this event felt like stepping into a space where every voice truly mattered. It was a reminder that no single, beautifully crafted story can ever capture what all our stories hold when woven together. Everyone came with their own truth, their own lens, and their own hope, and somehow it all fit.

Being part of this movement fills me with a sense of joy, not just because of the cause itself, but because I get to stand alongside people who are not only demanding change but actively working to build it. It's energizing, but it also comes with a deep sense of responsibility.

”

-Naomi Ayebale, Inaugural Cohort Member, Uganda

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

A defining moment was enacting the Declaration for the Future of Higher Education at the closing ceremony, reflecting months of stakeholder interviews, thematic analysis, and virtual read-parties with cohort members across time zones. I am deeply grateful to my working group and everyone we engaged for the shared dedication towards making this dynamic vision come alive. We occupy a powerful and crucial intersection between participation and policymaking.

”

–Lucky Geluk, Inaugural Cohort Member,  
South Africa

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

On the first day, we received a welcome video message from Reeta Roy. One powerful takeaway from her message was: “Your life is not about you; it is about others. It’s about service.” This has further inspired me to continue making an impact in the lives of marginalized groups in our society.

”

– Abanga Moses, Inaugural Cohort Member,  
Ghana

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

I had the honor of presenting on Ethical AI policies and considerations — not just how AI tools are built, but how we must give them a conscience, a moral compass, and a human-centered design.

As part of the Ethical AI Working Group, we’ve been working together since May, and seeing our efforts culminate here in Turkey showed me what young people can achieve when responsibility meets innovation.

”

-Theophile Manirakiza, Inaugural Cohort Member, Rwanda

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

This experience was a strong reminder, as Donald Bodzo said, in his storytelling video, that we rise by lifting others and that leadership is a shared journey. Dreams grow stronger when we grow together, and by listening to others and turning challenges into possibilities, we have the power to shape futures.

”

–Samuel Oliaha, Inaugural Cohort Member,  
South Sudan

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

I was surrounded by young leaders who aren't waiting for things to improve; they're driving the change. Running community projects, challenging injustice, building solutions from the ground up.

If there's one takeaway: solidarity without humility risks being performative. Listening, really listening to lived experience must shape how we design solutions. If our leadership is conscious, our actions will be more just, our technologies more inclusive, and our climate work more humane.

”

–Sibani Shandu, Inaugural Cohort Member,  
South Africa

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

The diversity was breathtaking. Languages flowing together, traditional attire from every corner of the globe, and the solidarity chain ceremony where we wrote our commitments and linked them together, a physical reminder that we're stronger united.

In solidarity we lead, with courage we act.

”

–Maria Gitau, Next Generation Leader Alumna,  
Kenya

## REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS:



“

If there's any movement of young people that has been so resilient, and adaptable amidst very challenging situations, then that movement is ours and that is the *For Youth, By Youth* movement

There is no work more rewarding, more nobler and motivating than engaging our communities and shaping them into what we need them to be, truly inclusive spaces for all. Thank you Talloires Network of Engaged Universities, thank you paNhari for bringing us together and for all partners for believing in our dreams, the dreams of young people.

”

–Harunah Damba, Next Generation Leader Alum, Uganda



**A movement is not held by a structure but by a social glue that drives and binds it together. Our social glue is shared creativity and agency, culture and meaning, solidarity, and the radical desire to transform.**

