Treaty of Middelburg

Presented at the International Youth Freedom Conference on May 2 and 3, 2025 in Middelburg, The Netherlands

Preamble

We, the 200 youth ambassadors of freedom from more than 50 countries worldwide, gather to commemorate and pass on the liberation 80 years after the end of World War II. We reflect on President Roosevelt´s Four Freedoms speech of January 1941.

With this Treaty, we as youth, in a period of increasing global tension and conflicts, recognize our shared responsibility to protect, strengthen, and pass on the hard-won freedom to future generations, thereby bringing about positive change for a peaceful future.

Through this living document, we strengthen the voice of our generation and call upon influential stakeholders worldwide to join us in securing a future for all humanity based on freedom.

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Freedom of Speech and Expression

Article 1.1: Personal Expression

The freedom to form, hold, and communicate one's thoughts, feelings, and ideas in an individual manner that is unrestricted, uncorked and uncensored; one shall not deny another's opinion and not contravene another's freedom.

1. The right to express through speech, art, and media

Everyone has the right to express themselves freely—verbally, in writing, visually, or digitally—without external interference. This includes artistic and creative expression such as literature, music, theater, film, and visual arts, as long as it is legal and respects the rights of others.

2. The right to express in public and digital spaces

All individuals have the right to safely and freely share their ideas, emotions, and opinions in digital spaces and through peaceful protest or symbolic acts, without discrimination or unjust restriction.

3. The right to protection through fair limitations

Freedom of expression may be lawfully limited to protect national security, public order, or vital interests. Such limitations must be clearly defined, necessary, and proportionate to ensure collective safety while preserving fundamental freedoms.

Article 1.2: Social media and communication

Individuals should have the freedom to express their views, opinions, and ideas on social media and other platforms without undue interference or censorship, while also having unrestricted access to all types of media, free from the effects of information disorder.

1. The right to access information and media freely

Everyone has the right to express themselves freely—verbally, in writing, visually, or digitally—without external interference. This includes artistic and creative expression such as literature, music, theater, film, and visual arts, as long as it is legal and respects the rights of others.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

2. The right to privacy, security, and digital identity

All individuals have the right to communicate safely and privately, with control over their personal data and digital identity—whether anonymous or public—free from unwarranted surveillance or forced disclosure, except as required by law.

3. The right to accurate information and protection from manipulation

Everyone has the right to a healthy information environment protected from misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. This includes the collective responsibility to promote truth, accuracy, and trust in public dialogue.

Article 1.3: Political freedom

Political freedom is the right to form, express, and participate in political processes without barriers, restrictions or intimidation. This includes the ability of individuals to access information about the political process and are able to engage meaningfully in decision-making through transparency and ethical governance. Individuals and groups must have the freedom to deliberate, organize and participate in political activities without fear of repercussions or coercion. Barriers to entry should be eliminated to create an open and inclusive environment that upholds justice, fairness, and equity for all without any prejudice. In addition, respect for the rule of law and human rights is fundamental to maintaining a democratic society where every voice matters.

1. The right to access political information and express views

Everyone has the right to clear, accurate, and transparent information about political processes, policies, and candidates—regardless of background or ability. Individuals must also be free to express their political beliefs, criticisms, and ideas without fear, while respecting the rights of others.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

2. The right to democratic participation and deliberation

All individuals and groups have the right to meaningfully participate in political life, including voting, being elected, forming or joining movements, and engaging in open, respectful debate in both public and private spaces.

3. The right to accountable and inclusive governance

Everyone has the right to be governed through transparent, fair, and participatory systems rooted in democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law. This includes holding decision-makers accountable and ensuring that all voices can contribute to shaping society.

Article 1.4: Education and knowledge sharing

The right to access information and knowledge, and to share and disseminate it freely.

1. The right to diverse and inclusive education

Everyone has the right to both formal and non-formal education, including academic learning, self-taught knowledge, cultural understanding, and indigenous wisdom. All forms of learning must be valued, protected, and respected.

2. The right to equitable access and autonomy in learning

All individuals have the right to access education without financial, physical, or social barriers. This includes equitable support for marginalized groups and the freedom to pursue knowledge independently and without discrimination or corruption.

3. The right to integrity, transparency, and innovation in education

Everyone has the right to education that is transparent, free from political or financial manipulation, and held to high ethical standards. Learners must be able to question ideas freely and benefit from inclusive, innovative tools—such as AI—that enhance and democratize the learning experience.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

Article 1.5: Responsibility in freedom

The balance between the right to freedom of expression and the responsibilities that come with exercising this freedom, such as showing respect for others, and being held accountable to consequences of actions at the following levels.

1. The right to freedom at all levels of society

Everyone has the right to live in a world where freedom is protected at the individual, national, and international levels. This includes state sovereignty, responsible governance, and the empowerment of individuals to act with autonomy, civic awareness, and moral responsibility.

2. The right to protection from abuse of power and censorship

All individuals have the right to freedom of expression without interference from governments, corporations, or other powerful actors. Systems must ensure accountability and prevent the misuse of authority that silences dissent or distorts public discourse.

3. The right to truth and protection from manipulation

Everyone has the right to accurate, trustworthy information and protection from false or misleading content. Combating misinformation requires transparency, media literacy, and a collective commitment to preserving democratic dialogue and public trust.

Freedom of Worship

Article 2.1: Religious tolerance

Religious tolerance is the respect for each person's right to freely follow, express, practice, and/or abstain from any religion or belief, without discrimination, coercion, and/or violence, and with equal legal protection for all, at any time and place.

1. The right to equal protection under law and policy

Everyone has the right to equal rights and freedoms, regardless of religious or non-religious beliefs. This includes protection from censorship, discrimination, or retaliation, provided their beliefs do not harm others.

2. The right to freedom of religion and expression

All individuals have the right to form, hold, change, and openly express their religions through speech, symbols, clothing, art, or any other form of communication.

3. The right to practice religious and cultural traditions

Everyone has the right to practice their beliefs—individually or in community—through worship, rituals, ceremonies, attire, and customs, both publicly and privately, as long as these practices respect the rights and safety of others.

Article 2.2: Freedom of belief

The right to confidently hold a set of norms and values of your choice.

1. The right to freedom from imposed belief

Everyone has the right to be free from beliefs imposed by societal, cultural, or institutional pressures, ensuring that personal convictions are consciously chosen and not unconsciously absorbed.

2. The right to hold and change beliefs

All individuals have the right to form, question, and change their beliefs at any time, without obligation to justify their choices to others.

Freedom of Worship

3. The right to express and defend beliefs
Everyone has the right to openly express and defend their personal values and convictions, even when these differ from the beliefs held by others in their community or society.

Article 2.3: Faith in society

The ability to follow your personal beliefs within the community you inhabit without restriction, with the freedom to express those beliefs without intruding on another person's dignity or freedom.

1. The right to belong to any community
Everyone has the right to freely choose the groups or communities they associate with, and to see minority identities represented, respected, and included within broader society.

2. The right to coexist through open dialogue
All individuals have the right to engage in open, respectful dialogue across different belief systems, fostering mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence in a diverse society.

3. The right to freedom from coercion in belief
Everyone has the right to think and believe freely, without being pressured or forced by the state, institutions, employers, or communities to adopt, change, or abandon any belief.

Article 2.4: Faith and politics

Definition: This article consists of the rights and responsibilities of worship and faith within politics.

1. The right to be a politician, regardless of belief
Everyone has the right to seek and hold public office without discrimination based on their religious or non-religious beliefs. Politicians must be free to express their identity and represent their electorate in accordance with their convictions.

Freedom of Worship

2. The right to uphold freedom of belief in public service

Politicians have a duty to promote, protect, and respect the freedom of belief and non-belief for all, while maintaining a clear distinction between personal expression and the impartiality required in governance.

3. The right to a neutral and inclusive political system

Political systems must not favor or exclude any religion. All laws, constitutions, and institutions must be guided by the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and the rule of law, ensuring that belief is never a barrier to participation or protection.

Article 2.5: Religion in the public domain

The freedom of every human to express and/or practice religions (research) and beliefs in the public domain without infringing upon any other human's freedoms and rights. Public domain shall be understood as the public spaces and institutions and the natural environment.

1. The right to express and practice beliefs freely

Everyone has the right to express and practice their religion or beliefs—verbally, non-verbally, publicly, or privately—without interference, as protected by international law and in full respect of others' rights to do the same.

2. The right to belief-inclusive education

Education must remain a space where individuals are free to explore, express, and engage with different religions and beliefs, without institutional promotion of any single worldview.

3. The right to respect, safety, and accountability

All individuals have the right to practice their beliefs in an environment of mutual respect and safety, free from fear or discrimination. Religious institutions share in this responsibility by acting lawfully and respectfully in relation to others.

Freedom from Want

Article 3.1: Poverty alleviation

The right to life free of poverty through the actions (strategies and policies) which help reduce and alleviate the results of absolute, relative, situational and generational poverty. Having the right to receive assistance to the different types of poverty to help meet the fundamental human rights and preserve the affected individuals dignity.

1. The right to live free from absolute poverty

Everyone has the right to conditions that meet basic human needs—including food, shelter, water, and safety. Absolute poverty, which denies these essentials, threatens the dignity and security of both affected individuals and society as a whole.

2. The right to equal socio-economic opportunity

All individuals and communities have the right to access essential public services—such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment—without systemic barriers that reinforce inequality or limit full participation in society.

3. The right to support in times of crisis

Everyone has the right to receive support when facing sudden or situational hardship, such as illness, unemployment, natural disaster, or other life-disrupting conditions, to ensure dignity, recovery, and inclusion.

Article 3.2: Access to basic needs

The right to an adequate standard of living that ensures their survival, upholds their dignity, and enables their full and equitable participation in society.

Every person is entitled to a standard of living that ensures survival, dignity, and equity. This includes access to basic necessities like safe water, food, shelter, sanitation, and health care; the means for a dignified life such as safety, education, autonomy, and freedom of belief; and equal opportunities through protection from bias, access to work and education, and the ability to live self-sufficiently. States must guarantee these conditions for all, without discrimination.

Freedom from Want

1. The right to survival and health
Everyone has the right to the essential conditions required to stay alive and healthy—this includes safe drinking water, nutritious food, secure shelter, sanitation, and access to emergency and primary healthcare. These must be available, accessible, acceptable, and of adequate quality for all, without discrimination.

2. The right to live with dignity
Every person has the right to a dignified life, grounded in respect, freedom, and humane treatment. This includes access to personal safety, mental health care, social connection, freedom of belief, bodily autonomy, legal protection under the rule of law, learning of choice, and a life free from chronic instability.

3. The right to an equitable life
All individuals have the right to self-development in a society that recognizes their inherent and equal worth. This means equitable access to education, bodily integrity, autonomy, and opportunities for meaningful participation in daily life—supported by inclusive systems and legal safeguards.

Article 3.3: Equal opportunities for all

The freedom to pursue one's goal without being obstructed by factors outside their control.

1. The right to equal legal protection
Everyone has the right to equal treatment under the law, including fair access to justice, equal protection by law enforcement and courts, and freedom from discriminatory laws or practices.

2. The right to equal access to essential services
All individuals have the right to access and benefit from basic services—such as healthcare, education, and public safety—without barriers based on income, identity, or background.

Freedom from Want

3. The right to live in safety and security
Everyone has the right to be protected from harm, whether physical, social, or environmental, and to live in stable conditions that allow them to thrive and pursue life opportunities.

Article 3.4: Education and employment

Freedom of want in education and employment as a right to equal opportunity access to affordable quality education able to provide safe employment capable of providing economic self sufficiency and fulfilment.

1. The right to accessible and equitable education
Everyone has the right to education that is affordable, inclusive, and free from bias or discrimination. This includes equal access to quality learning opportunities and support, regardless of background or identity, so all individuals can grow, think freely, and contribute responsibly to society.

2. The right to safe and secure employment
All individuals have the right to employment that ensures physical safety, emotional well-being, job security, and protection from discrimination or exploitation in the workplace.

3. The right to meaningful and sustainable work
Everyone has the right to employment that provides financial stability, supports personal and family needs, and offers opportunities for purpose, dignity, and personal development in alignment with one's values.

Freedom from Want

Article 3.5: Healthcare for all

Healthcare is a collective human obligation. Healthcare is a basic human right that belongs to everyone, everywhere. It means having access to prevention, treatment, education, and support — no matter who you are, where you live, or what you can afford. Healthcare should be fair, safe, and available in both cities and rural areas. People must be able to understand and manage their own health, and systems should work for the good of all, not for power or profit. Countries must share knowledge, support each other, and invest in research that benefits everyone. True freedom from want means making sure no one is left behind when it comes to health.

1. The right to accessible and inclusive healthcare

Everyone has the right to affordable, geographically accessible, and non-discriminatory healthcare. This includes secure access to personal health information, universal coverage through fair funding, and systems that serve both urban and rural communities equally.

2. The right to health education and prevention

All individuals have the right to accessible, inclusive health education that empowers them to make informed decisions about their well-being. This includes knowledge about nutrition, hygiene, reproductive care, mental health, and preventive measures such as screenings, vaccinations, and early detection—especially for marginalized communities.

3. The right to equitable treatment and transparent research

Everyone has the right to timely, respectful, and high-quality healthcare—from diagnosis to treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care—regardless of background or location. Health research must be inclusive, globally collaborative, and publicly accessible, ensuring no group is left behind in medical innovation or care.

Freedom from Fear

Article 4.1: Safety and justice

The right to live in a secure environment, protected from harm, discrimination, and abuse of power.

1. The right to live free from fear and insecurity

Everyone has the right to personal safety, dignity, and self-worth. This includes protection from violence, discrimination, psychological harm, and the social pressures that lead to constant comparison, exclusion, or fear.

2. The right to truth and protection from abuse of power

All individuals have the right to fair and transparent systems, free from corruption, censorship, and manipulation. This includes protection from disinformation, misuse of authority, and discrimination—ensuring informed decision-making and equal treatment for all.

3. The right to digital and environmental security

Everyone has the right to a safe and stable environment—physically, socially, and digitally. This includes protection from war, natural disasters, climate threats, and the unauthorized use or abuse of personal data that endangers privacy and autonomy.

Article 4.2: Protection from violence

The right to be protected from any act, structure, or system that causes physical or mental (psychological, emotional, or social) harm to an individual or group, whether intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, visible or invisible, including harm perpetuated by individuals, groups, institutions, or the state.

1. The right to personal autonomy and dignity

Every individual has the right to bodily autonomy, self-determination, and personal integrity. This includes the freedom and responsibility to make decisions about one's own body, actions, and life, free from violence, coercion, or discrimination.

Freedom from Fear

2. The right to safety and support within communities and institutions

Everyone has the right to live in safe, inclusive communities and to be protected from harm by families, companies, NGOs, and other organized groups. This includes safeguarding human rights, fostering collective resilience, and ensuring accountability for any abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

3. The right to protection at all levels of governance and global cooperation

All individuals and groups have the right to be protected from harm by local, national, and international systems—including governments, police, military, and global institutions. This requires just, accountable structures that prevent violence, address structural injustice, and respond to global threats such as disasters, disease, and conflict.

Article 4.3: Workplace safety

The condition of a workplace in which all parties are protected from physical harm, emotional distress, and financial insecurity, within an environment that upholds equality and justice.

1. The right to equality, fairness, and inclusion at work

Everyone has the right to fair and equal treatment in the workplace—regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion, or age. This includes equal pay for equal work, non-discriminatory hiring, protection from harassment, and access to inclusive growth and leadership opportunities.

2. The right to financial and physical security in the workplace

All workers have the right to a stable, fair income, job security, and protection from retaliation. Employers also have the right to fair operational conditions. Together, both parties share the responsibility of ensuring safe, hazard-free environments, access to healthcare, and sustainable economic practices that protect livelihoods and well-being.

Freedom from Fear



3. The right to emotional safety and mental health at work

Everyone has the right to a respectful, inclusive, and emotionally safe workplace. This includes protection from burnout, discrimination, and overwork—alongside support for work-life balance, privacy, and mental health care that preserves dignity and well-being.

Article 4.4: Political stability

The importance of a stable government and society in which individuals can live safely, have their rights protected, and have representation for all.

1. The right to sustainable and future-focused governance

Everyone has the right to live under a political system that makes long-term decisions in the interest of current and future generations. This includes governance aligned with ecological balance, social equity, and planetary limits—built on resilience, adaptability, and the capacity for transformative change.

2. The right to justice and fair enforcement

All individuals have the right to consistent, impartial, and transparent enforcement of laws and rights. Justice must be grounded in fairness, delivered through accountable institutions, and upheld by strong, trusted, and independent legal systems.

3. The right to responsible and transparent leadership

Governments and institutions must serve the public interest above personal or political gain. Everyone has the right to systems of checks and balances that ensure accountability, protect minorities, and uphold democratic values through transparency and ethical governance.

Article 4.5: Protection of vulnerable groups

The right of vulnerable groups (such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, minorities and refugees) to be safeguarded from discrimination, violence, exploitation and neglect.

Freedom from Fear

1. The right to legal protection and safeguarding

All individuals—especially vulnerable groups such as children, refugees, people with disabilities, and the elderly—have the right to legal protection from discrimination, abuse, and neglect. This includes safeguards in education, healthcare, caregiving, and employment settings, as well as early education on risks and rights.

2. The right to advocacy, representation, and digital safety

Everyone has the right to be heard in policy-making and to be represented in decisions that affect their lives. This includes protection from online exploitation, misinformation, and harassment, along with education on digital risks, particularly for those most vulnerable to harm.

3. The right to support through services and crisis response

Vulnerable individuals have the right to equal access to healthcare, housing, education, and social services. In times of crisis or disaster, they must receive timely humanitarian aid and emergency protection, supported by systems that prioritize inclusion, awareness, and care.

Conclusion

At this historic moment on May 3, 2025, in Middelburg, we, the 200 youth ambassadors of freedom, call upon world leaders to join us in protecting and promoting our freedoms. We ask them to embed the principles of this Treaty of Middelburg in policy and decision-making. This Treaty serves as a starting point for our joint action towards a better world, built on tolerance, cooperation, and shared responsibility in freedom.

We urgently appeal to every **leader** to:

- Publicly support the Treaty of Middelburg and incorporate its principles into policy and decision-making.
- Collaborate with governments and international organizations on a global taskforce for implementing the treaty objectives.
- Strengthen existing mechanisms and legal frameworks to protect human rights, prevent conflicts, and promote sustainable development.

We call on **governments** to:

- Integrate the treaty principles into national policies, with attention to alignment between local, regional, and international efforts.
- Establish or expand programs that address poverty, inequality, and climate change, and promote social cohesion.
- Actively involve youth in policy-making and decision-making, recognizing that they are crucial for a peaceful and sustainable future.

We encourage **international organizations** to:

- Stimulate cooperation between governments, civil society organizations, and the business sector, promote joint action, and facilitate the exchange of best practices.
- Support countries with technical assistance and capacity building in effectively implementing the treaty principles.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate progress, with attention to transparency and accountability in implementing the treaty objectives.

Together, in honor of those who fought for our freedom, let us turn these words into powerful action. By employing the principles of The Treaty of Middelburg, we can create a world that cherishes peace, guarantees freedoms, and promotes prosperity for all.

Signed on May 3, 2025, in Middelburg.

STICHTING 80 JAAR
VRIJHEID ZEELAND