

“Youth Create Gender Equality- – Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work”

YOUTH FORUM AT THE 61st COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN

Organized by UN Women, YWCA, WAGGGS with the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development’s Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality.

11th and 12th March 2017, UN Headquarters, New York, USA,

BACKGROUND

We are living in a world plagued by conflict, economic insecurity, rising extremism and a growing migrant and refugee crisis. Girls and young women are specially affected by this as well as by gender-based discrimination, marginalization, violence and other human rights violations, including unequal access to quality education, healthcare, employment, and opportunities for leadership and participation. This situation demands that we hold the line with a unified assertion of the counter-narrative of peace, gender equality, sustainability and shared prosperity, including for the most marginalized and excluded.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is largely about youth and for youth, and the force and inspiration of our youngest leaders represents one of the critical drivers for accelerating progress on sustainable development and gender equality. **Advancing young women’s and girls’ human rights, economic empowerment and political participation are critical levers for driving progress on gender equality, fighting inequalities and eradicating poverty, supporting health and wellness in our communities, and promoting inclusive sustainable development.**

Despite growing evidence of the positive outcomes of young women’s and girls’ economic empowerment, young women and girls continue to experience unequal access to education and skills development. They face barriers to securing decent work and opportunities to thrive as entrepreneurs. Young women’s access to resources, including land and loans, may be restricted by discriminatory laws and practices. Furthermore, young women and girls continue to shoulder an unequal share of unpaid care work from an early age, due to the persistence of traditional gender roles. To overcome these and other challenges, we need a strong, transnational discourse of substantive gender equality, opportunity and justice, building and gathering strength from grassroots movements and networks and coalitions.

RATIONALE

The Youth Forum will build on the successes of the Youth Forum organized at CSW60, which brought together more than 300 young people. Delegates of the Youth Forum at CSW60 produced the first-ever Youth Declaration on Gender Equality and the Human Rights of Young Women and Adolescent Girls, which was presented to the Chair of CSW60, H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil, and used as a key advocacy tool during the proceedings of CSW60 and beyond. The Youth Forum at the 61st Session on Commission on Status of Women (CSW 61) is a critical opportunity for young people and adolescents in all their diversities to convene in advance of the official opening of CSW to amplify their common concerns and advocacy efforts.

The Youth Forum will create a safe space for young people, particularly young women and girls, to openly, and strategically discuss the challenges and opportunities in their local, national, regional and global contexts in accelerating progress to achieve gender equality and sustainable development.

Additionally, the Youth Forum will foster collaboration and strategic networking among all young women and young men, and adolescent girls and boys, to strengthen their participation, voice, and leadership in the movement for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The goal is to continue to build a global movement and infuse momentum with youth leadership for gender equality and sustainable development to move the action forward. The Forum is not intended to be a stand-alone event but will create an intergenerational ecosystem of support that will create momentum and strengthen capacity to move youth as key implementers of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national and regional levels.

OBJECTIVES, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, and KEY OUTPUTS

The key objectives of the Youth Forum include:

- Building from Youth Forum CSW60, amplify the advocacy of youth and adolescents in norm-setting and policy-making for gender equality and sustainable development, during and beyond CSW61
- Enhance partnerships, networks, and movements among young women and young men, adolescent girls and boys, and youth-led organizations working on gender equality
- Strengthen skills and knowledge of youth, adolescents, and youth-led organizations for advocacy, policy-making, and program development and implementation for gender equality in their local communities
- Strengthen intergenerational partnerships, collaboration, listening, and learning among young feminists and experienced mentors and leaders in the women's rights and gender equality movement

The guiding principles of the Youth Forum include:

- Inclusive, Participatory and Experiential: Including diverse voices and experiences to highlight intersectional challenges and opportunities
- Non-discrimination and Safe Space: Creating safe and supportive spaces for young women and adolescent girls to engage with other delegates and policy makers
- Collaboration and Supporting Each Other: Providing capacity building, mentorship, and opportunities for delegates to engage in norm-setting and policy-making to advance gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls
- Equality and Encouragement: Fostering intergenerational partnerships and participation in an intentional way
- Commitment to follow up and movement building.

The key outputs of the Youth Forum include:

- A 'set of outcomes' -- One critical output of the Youth Forum at CSW61 is to produce a Youth Declaration/statement, comprising a thorough analysis of the priority theme of CSW61 and

recommendations for governments, inter-governmental organisations, civil society actors as well as other institutions and stakeholders.

- The Youth Declaration will be anchored in the voices and experiences of young people and should be seen as one way for young people to meaningfully participate in influencing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributing to the discussions of the High-level Political Forum in June 2017, as well as to contribute to discussions surrounding the CSW61 priority themes and the achievement of gender equality globally.
- An accessible, youth-friendly knowledge product to share best practices and case studies on youth-led action to achieve gender equality (e.g. a manual or toolkit, series of video interviews or blog posts)
- A database of stakeholders to promote networking, with a special emphasis on south-to-south and triangular cooperation to strengthen young women's and adolescent girls' participation in development and gender equality policy and advocacy
- An agreement on a roadmap to sustain and build momentum
- A plan to continue to engage in advocacy during CSW, International Youth Skills Day, International Youth Day, International Day of the Girl Child, UN General Assembly, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda, and other international, regional, and local forums

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

Adolescent girls, young women plus adolescent boys and young men (between the ages of 14 to 35) with experience in promoting gender equality will be invited to participate in this forum. The Youth Forum aims to convene approximately 500 youth and adolescents from diverse backgrounds and locations **ensuring diversity and inclusion**. There will be a special focus on inclusion for the most marginalized adolescent girls and young women.

For those who are not able to attend the Youth Forum at CSW61 in person, the UN IANYD Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality will conduct online and offline consultations to bring forth the voices and concerns of young people from their communities to the Youth Forum at CSW61.

DATES AND VENUE

- Saturday 11 - Sunday 12 March 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters, NYC

PROPOSED PARTNERSHIPS

- Youth-Led Organizations: World Associations of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), World YWCA, AWID, FRIDA, RESURJ, CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality, Major Group on Children and Youth, ICMYO-International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, World Organizations of Scouts Movement, World Youth Alliance, Indigenous Youth Caucus, AYUDH, and others
- International NGOs: Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision, Child Fund, War Child Holland, Search for Common Ground, Girls (20) and others

- Regional Groups: Latin America and Caribbean Global Movement for Children, Ibero-American Youth Council, European Youth Forum, Positive Youth Network from Latin America & the Hispanic Caribbean, and others
- Governments: New York City, Canada, Mexico, Norway, Netherlands, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Turkey, USA, UK, South Africa, Russia and other post-Soviet countries, and others
- Inter-governmental Bodies and UN Agencies: Council of Europe, UN-Habitat
- Private Sector: Adobe, Ford Foundation, MasterCard Foundation and others

PLANNING TASK FORCE

The Youth Forum will be youth driven and youth led. The planning will be primarily led by UN Women, WAGGGS, and World YWCA and other members of the UN Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development's Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality (which includes 700+ individuals and organizations working on youth and gender equality, co-chaired by UN Women, the World Association of Girl Guides, and World Organizations of Scouts Movement)

ANNEX: YOUTH FORUM AT CSW 60 - DECLARATION

<http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news/stories/2016/youthcsw-2016-declaration.pdf?v=1&d=20160321T155235>

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