

“The role of youth in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity in a changing world”

Background

Since 2012, the annual Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), has become a platform where young people can contribute to policy discussions at the United Nations through their collective ideas, solutions and innovations. The Forum allows representatives of youth-led and youth-focused organizations and networks, youth advocates and others to dialogue with Member States, and to explore ways and means of promoting youth development and engagement.

The report of the Secretary-General “Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level” (A/70/684), prepared in response to paragraph 90 of the 2030 Agenda, recognizes the potential of the ECOSOC Youth Forum by stating that the High-level Political Forum could be informed by and benefit from several specific Economic and Social Council forums covering cross-cutting issues in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the existing forum on youth (para 31). Furthermore, in its resolution 70/299, the General Assembly encouraged coherence of the ECOSOC and its subsidiary machinery with the work of the High-level Political Forum. Youth development is a cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda, and all goals and targets are interdependent and must be pursued together since progress in one area often depends on progress in other areas.

The sixth ECOSOC Youth Forum, to be held from 30 to 31 January 2017, will take place at a critical historical juncture as the world is struggling to respond to the negative effects of globalization. Young people have been disproportionately impacted by rising inequality brought about by rapid technological innovation – where the beneficiaries are often the ones that are the innovators and investors. With the increasing digitization of the economy, the demand for highly skilled workers will continue to increase at the expense of workers with less education and skills. As more jobs get lost to automation and wages stagnate or decrease, the backlash against globalization is expected to increase. The trend towards nationalism and isolation, which is growing more widespread, is likely to grow stronger in response to global competition and trade.

While young people around the world are among those left behind, the unemployed, the working poor and underemployed, they have the potential to be among those who stand to benefit the most from technological innovation and associated changes in the global economy. They tend to be among the first to embrace new ideas and innovations and they remain open to the idea of global solutions to global problems. By involving them centrally in the project of “shared prosperity” which is at the core of the sustainable development agenda, they can continue to support multilateral approaches led by the United Nations. The ECOSOC Youth Forum is therefore an important dedicated space to engage in the discussion on how to make globalization work for everyone through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This universal, integrated agenda is designed to ensure equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization. This engagement will not only help to deliver results but also strengthen accountability.

The Forum¹ will contribute to ECOSOC's High-level Segment, including the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), which will be held in July 2017 on the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". The SDGs, to be reviewed under the 2017 HLPF are: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1); End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (Goal 2); Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal 3); Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5); Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (Goal 9); Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Goal 14); and Strengthen the means of implementation and Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Goal 17).

Objectives

- To provide a platform for young people to engage in a dialogue with Member States on the themes of the ECOSOC High-level Segment, including the HLPF.
- To promote innovative approaches and initiatives for advancing the youth development agenda at national, regional and global levels with a view to promoting global (multilateral) solutions to the global challenge of "shared prosperity".
- To share knowledge on achieving youth development by promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- To launch ideas and initiatives for collective action for people, planet, peace and prosperity.

Format and Participants

The 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum will feature opening and closing plenary sessions with representatives from youth organizations, high-level and other keynote speakers. The programme will also include thematic and regional breakout sessions. During the interactive sessions, the moderators will have a primary role to actively engage the audience, using social media, with pertinent questions related to the various themes to be addressed.

A Ministerial Roundtable will be held which could feature national reviews of progress on youth development and youth engagement in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Best practices and lessons learned could be shared that may benefit other Member States and other stakeholders. Representatives of youth-led and youth-focused organizations and networks, civil society and the private sector could also provide views on youth development and engagement trends. Young people will also be encouraged to make individual and group commitments for action for achieving the SDGs. The discussion will also reinforce the need for measures to ensure that globalization is embraced by everyone and its burdens and blessings are shared equally.

All plenary sessions will feature SDG Youth Advocates, YouTubers and social media influencers, in interactive and dynamic discussions. The objective is to leverage their influence and global reach to inspire concrete actions to promote implementation.

¹ The Forum is being organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, in particular its Working Group on Youth and SDGs.

Participants will include Ministers, including Ministers of youth, high-level representatives of national youth institutions, UN Youth Advocates such as National Youth Councils or Institutes, representatives from the Permanent Missions of Member States to the UN in New York, youth delegates, representatives from the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, youth representatives from CSOs or youth-led/youth-organizations and movements as well as representatives of regional and other multilateral organizations. Other participants will include the UN System, academia, business sector, media and NGOs with consultative status with ECOSOC. The Forum will also reflect diversity of youth organizations, include balanced representation of youth from developed and developing countries and ensure representation of youth from rural communities, indigenous groups and people with disability, both men and women.

The meeting will be webcast and participants will be able to pose questions via social media through Facebook and Twitter.

Outcome

The outcome will be an informal summary of the proceedings by the President of ECOSOC capturing key outcomes of the discussions and findings of the Forum, which will be made available to the High-level Political Forum convened under the auspices of ECOSOC and the High-level Segment of the Council in July 2017. A Presidential Statement will also be issued at the closing of the Forum.