



#YOUTH2030

6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Session on Latin America

31 January 2017

Trusteeship Council Chamber

9:30 – 11:00 am

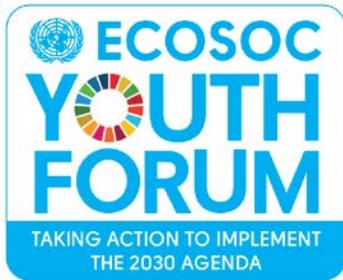
United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. Background and context

Poverty affects close to 1 in 3 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in Latin America.¹ Poverty, in its multiple manifestations, limits the possibilities of youth and their full enjoyment of their rights and can leave them at the margins of the economic, social, political and cultural processes that are taking place in our societies. This exclusion not only prevents Latin American youth from fully enjoying their rights, it also leads to fragmented and polarized societies, to increases in inequality, and it generates tensions that are manifested at the individual-, family-, community- and societal-level. Moreover, the invisibility and exclusion of youth are factors that are associated with the high levels of violence that exist in several countries of the region.

On the whole, the situation of youth in the region is mixed. Important gains have been made in secondary education, particularly among young women. On average, close to 60 percent of the region's youth aged 20-24 completed secondary education in 2012, compared to just 35 percent of 20-24 years olds a decade earlier. However, these improvements have not equated to gains in the labour market, as youth continue to experience higher levels of unemployment compared to adults. In fact, youth unemployment rates in the region are between two and three times higher than adult unemployment rates, a trend that has not changed over the past few decades. Moreover, youth employment is characterized by being unstable and in the informal market. Over one in five youth in the region, 29.7 million youth, are not involved in studies or in the labour market and youth in this group are often highly stigmatized and linked to vagrancy, violence, and drug consumption. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that a majority of youth in this group are young women who are responsible for domestic and care tasks within the home. We need to recognize the impact of youth entrepreneurship in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our region has transitioned from economies that were mostly composed by out-of-necessity entrepreneurs, to a region where dynamic entrepreneurs are creating jobs and employment opportunities; developing new technologies that are clearly bolstering development, reducing inequalities, fighting poverty, and tackling climate change. In the area of health, persistently high adolescent maternity rates, substance abuse, and morbidity and mortality relating to injuries are

¹ Monetary poverty.



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of particular concern. Relating to this latter point, violence, in different forms and manifestations, has a profound effect on the region's youth. Seven of the ten countries with the highest homicide rates in the world are in Latin American or the Caribbean and youth are affected by violence, both as victims and perpetrators. In terms of political participation, youth in the region express skepticism over traditional political institutions, and they question the ability of democratically elected governments to truly represent their interests. Nonetheless, a majority of them vote and they find new ways to organize and intervene in the political arena, sometimes with notable results – youth have protagonized a number of movements that have resulted in significant political and social changes in recent years.

This reality occurs in a context of marked inequalities – between countries and especially within countries. These inequalities in opportunity and in outcomes limit the ability of millions of youth in the region to fulfill their potential and contribute fully to their societies. Socio-economic situation, sex, racial/ethnic background, place of residence, migration status, disability, sexual orientation, and VIH status are some of the dimensions that shape the prospects for young people in the region.

Governments in the region have taken positive steps to advance the situation of young people by enacting national youth policies and youth-specific legislation, and other positive steps, such as the adoption of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and its implementation guide, which has a strong focus on youth. The recent adoption of the Iberoamerican Youth Pact during the XXV Iberoamerican Summit is also an important development. However, challenges remain, including the effective implementation and follow up of these policies, achieving greater articulation and coordination among entities that promote youth development at all levels, financing, and youth participation in these processes. On their part youth are also actively involved in promoting a positive change in their communities and society as a whole.

The active participation of young people is key to ensure sustainable decisions and inclusive policy-making processes. In an effort to incorporate youth, the Organization of American States(OAS) has opened an official space for their participation towards the Summit of the Americas. Since 2005, young people from all the OAS Member States have the opportunity to transmit their opinions regarding the Summit of the Americas theme and priorities, provide recommendations, express their needs, and present their actions, particularly through innovative solutions developed by young entrepreneurs.

For the past 10 years, more than 23,000 young people had participated in the Young Americas Forum, a process organized by the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT) in cooperation with the OAS, and with the support of the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, private sector organizations, and the OAS member States. Young people are official social actors of the Summit of the Americas, and in that capacity, they are also now seen as active partners for sustainable development. Governments and social actors don't see young people only as a population facing problems and in the need of support, but as a source for innovative solutions and a reliable source for positive change.



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Most countries of the region still stand to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend due to their young age structure. Nonetheless, in order for this to happen greater investments need to be made in youth and the positive potential of youth as strategic actors in development needs to be recognized, taking advantage of their higher levels of education, their mastery of technological tools, their more globalized worldview, and the innovative ways they find to make their voices heard.

2. Objectives

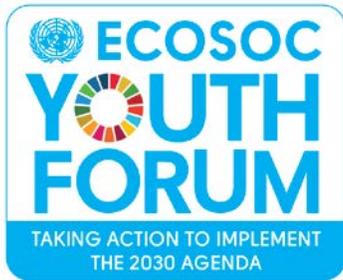
This breakout session will bring together diverse participants interested in various aspects pertaining to youth development and poverty in Latin America. In a moderated discussion, breakout session participants will exchange views and engage in an open and candid discussion. In particular, the session will aim to:

- Consider the existing challenges as they relate to poverty in all of its dimensions for youth in Latin America;
- Reflect on the role young people can play in addressing these challenges and in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America;
- Share innovative approaches and initiatives for advancing the youth development agenda at the national and regional levels.

It is expected that the moderator will guide the discussions and create an interactive dialogue with the participants focused on these objectives and to address the session questions (below). From this discussion, key messages and recommendations on how to continue to advance youth development in Latin America and how to further promote the involvement of youth will be distilled.

3. Questions

- What are the specific challenges facing Latin American youth with respect to poverty, in all of its dimensions?
- What are some good practices or experiences in addressing youth un- and under-employment in Latin America?
- What are some key mechanisms to guarantee meaningful participation among Latin American youth in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and other regional development processes?
 - How can youth themselves be proactive to ensure this meaningful participation?
 - How can we involve youth ministries and regional and sub-regional youth mechanisms, such as the International Organization of Youth for Iberoamerica (OIJ) in these actions?
- What measures can be taken to effectively implement the national youth policies that are in place in the countries in the region, increase investment in youth and strengthen



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articulation and coordination among public entities working to promote youth development?

4. Suggested readings

CAF/CEPAL/OCDE (Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina/Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe/ Organización de Cooperación y Desarrollo Económicos), Perspectivas económicas de América Latina 2017. Juventud, competencias y emprendimiento, 2016.

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