



**ECOSOC  
YOUTH  
FORUM**

**#YOUTH2030**

## 8<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

### ONLINE REPORTING

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

**8 April 2019  
CR 6, 4-6 p.m.  
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

<b>Session lead</b>	Maria Stage, UNDP
<b>Session rapporteur</b>	Kudzai Mukaratirwa, OMUN
<b>Session moderator</b>	Kudzai Mukaratirwa, OMUN
<b>Session note-taker 1</b>	Charlotte Nalumansi, UN MGCY
<b>Session note-taker 2</b>	Rodrigo De Sousa Araujo, UNODC

#### CURRENT LANDSCAPE

**What is the current landscape for this region or SDG, including issues, opportunities, recent trends, gaps, challenges?**

In the breakout session on Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16): Peace, justice and strong and inclusive institutions young people described challenges, opportunities and aspirations.

Young participants identified several challenges to unleash the full and critical potential of young people for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. One challenge is the narrative of youth as trouble-makers, perpetrators of violence and victims. We heard young people demand a shift to perceive youth

as agents of change and peacebuilders – as most young people are. At the same time, it was recognised that drivers for youth recruitment to terrorism, organised crime and radical movements needs to be addressed. Furthermore, a participant mentioned the disproportionate expenditure on war compared to peace and called for increased investment in peacebuilding and prevention.

Young people face challenges in relation to justice and human rights. We heard that youth lack access to justice and are not given the political power to demand equal opportunities. Lack of information and non-inclusive language are some barriers for young people’s understanding of rights, thus preventing them to assume an active role towards progress on SDG16. Stressing that implementation of human rights education takes place in different contexts, young participants called upon sensitivity to the local contexts.

Another challenge relates to the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes, peace processes and society at large. Barriers identified in the session include exclusion from decision-making and leadership, lack of a sustained architecture to support youth participation in the implementation, monitoring, review and follow-up of SDG16 and underrepresentation of marginalised and vulnerable groups and youth from local communities.

Young participants also mentioned the negative effects of structural inequality, lack of quality jobs, poverty, corruption, exclusion of marginalized groups and lack of quality education for progress on SDG16.

We heard about persistent challenges for youth empowerment. Nevertheless, young people already make positive change for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The participants recognized some supportive frameworks for the role of youth as critical agents of change. Among these were the UN Security Council Resolution 2250(2015) on youth, peace and security; the Doha Declaration (A/RES/70/174), the independent progress study on youth, peace and security (2018); and the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

### **YOUTH SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS**

**(What are youth doing to address the current situation and leverage opportunities? And what are some of the most transformative solutions?)**

Young people identified several youth solutions and actions for the promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies and stressed that young people must be empowered to reach inclusivity, representativity and leaving no one behind as called upon in the 2030 Agenda.

We heard about the role of youth organisations and networks in enhancing representation in decision-making processes and accountability of institutions. It was recognised that for youth to perform this role, stakeholders must address the aspirations and needs of young people and support and strengthen existing youth-led organisations that are already having an impact on the ground in their societies.

Young participants agreed that partnerships are vital for youth solutions and actions on SDG16. Through partnerships with member states, civil society, the UN and other stakeholders, youth can contribute to strengthen representation and participation in decision-making and bring in locally driven perspectives. Young participants shared experiences with youth-driven on the ground consultations and the positive

impact of these for the development of innovative and efficient strategies to reach the SDGs. Furthermore, it was recognized that the active and meaningful participation of youth targets development effort to the needs and aspirations of young people. In addition, young participants identified technology as a crucial tool for partnerships. By using technology - and in particular social media - young men and women connect to peers, share knowledge and enable learning. Participants called upon innovations for peace that have youth at the forefront. Young participants also noted that redundancy and duplication of development efforts can be avoided through collaboration and, therefore, young people should mobilize together to gain from the strength in numbers and partner with stakeholders at all levels.

Youth solutions and actions were considered drivers of coexistence. For instance, participants mentioned how youth-led initiatives with a focus on community integration and participation play a key role in fostering a generational change of mindset towards the promotion of a culture of peace and lawfulness and offer safer spaces for youth. Young participants mentioned sport, education and the use of new technologies as impactful approaches of young people. Furthermore, young participants recognised the power of youth to teach their families and communities about values of peace, justice and security. Also, demands by youth for justice and equity were acknowledged.

### **LOOKING TO THE HORIZON**

**What can the UN and youth do together to make sure young people's contributions have a deeper and wider impact, and that they are better served and engaged by member states?**

The session provided recommendations on youth empowerment for progress on SDG16.

We must promote the participation of young people in formal and informal decision-making and peace processes and empower young people to foster coexistence in and between societies divided by conflict. We hear how young people are often excluded from political and peace processes, but we need to promote the meaningful participation of young people to sustain peace.

We hear about the need of young people to know their rights in order to claim and act on their rights. This is a call for awareness raising and education to fight corruption and promote access to justice and human rights for all young people. It is necessary to democratise information and access to fundamental rights, especially to unprivileged and marginalised youth segments, the main victims of unpeaceful societies.

We need to ensure the inclusion of a diversity of young people in the review and follow-up of the SDGs. Meaningful inclusion of the most marginalized and the young people working at the local level must be prioritized to ensure leaving no one behind. We were reminded that to ensure representation we must change behaviour and transform systems.

SDG16 must be acknowledged as an enabler for the entire 2030 Agenda with its linkages between peace, justice and strong institutions and other SDGs on education, reduced inequalities, partnerships and sustainable cities and communities. In doing so, we must invest in young people as critical agents of change and promote innovative youth-led initiatives with impactful approaches.

The UN plays a crucial role in supporting youth leadership towards the achievement of SDG16 and young people play an important role in keeping member states accountable to their commitments to implement the SDGs.