9th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

CONCEPT NOTE

SDG Generation: Shaping the Decade Ahead

1-2 April 2020

Introduction

The political declaration of the SDG Summit, held on 24-25 September 2019, sets out a common vision to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and pledges to make the coming decade one of action and delivery for sustainable development. It also acknowledges that business-as-usual is not an option, and transformative pathways are needed to achieve the SDGs. In the declaration, the world leaders made an unwavering promise to “children and youth of today so that they may achieve their full human potential and carry the torch of sustainable development to future generations”. They also recognized the importance of partnering with youth, on an equal footing, for attaining a successful decade of action.

The 9th Annual Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum thus comes at a critical time, as the world embarks on a decisive decade of the 2030 Agenda through finding systemic solutions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The ECOSOC Youth Forum has evolved into a key platform where young people, high-level Government representatives and other stakeholders of the youth sector contribute to policy discussions through their positions, ideas, solutions, and innovations for the SDGs. It is organically connected with key UN processes and events under the umbrella framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Building on the tradition, the 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum will serve as a platform for multi-stakeholder discussion on how young people’s role can be further amplified and strengthened within the overarching framework of decade of action for the SDGs, and in line with all society approach.

The Forum will also complement year-long activities planned for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. The UN General Assembly, in resolution A/RES/73/299 adopted on 14 June 2019, called for engaging youth in all activities to mark the UN 75th Anniversary and organizing a youth plenary in conjunction with the 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum. The Youth Plenary will be convened jointly under the auspices of the
President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC. The outcome of the Youth Plenary will feed into the ECOSOC Youth Forum as well as the 21 September 2020 high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the 75th Anniversary. The focus of the ECOSOC Youth Forum will be guided by the theme of the 2020 HLPF: "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development ".

Objectives

The 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum will:

- Provide a platform for young people to meaningfully engage in a dialogue with UN Member States and UN entities on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.
- Be guided by the theme of the 2020 HLPF on “Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” and build on the Youth Plenary’s theme of the United Nations 75th anniversary on “The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism”.
- Share ideas and knowledge, skills, and lessons on achieving the rights and well-being of youth by promoting the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensuring the participation of young people in policy-making and implementation.
- Present ideas and solutions -- and showcase innovative initiatives and individual and collective action by youth and others -- to advance the SDGs based on national, regional and global experiences.
- Leverage the platform that it provides to further advocate for and advance the UN Youth Strategy, as well as increase coherence between Youth Forum and UN Youth Strategy.
- Discuss and report on progress for the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy, Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People, and other issues related to young people including sharing information on plans for measuring and monitoring its impact at the country, regional and global levels and considering the role that young people and youth organizations can play in the implementation of the strategy.

Substantive Scope

Young people have demonstrated that they are key actors in the economic, social and environmental development, peacebuilding and humanitarian action in their countries. Youth is increasingly demanding more just, peaceful, equitable, progressive and sustainable societies. They are a testament of the ability to think outside the box and to develop innovative solutions for society as a whole. In that context, there is a need to address the multifaceted challenges faced by young people such as poverty and hunger, for many, as well as access to quality education, health, decent employment, gender equality, and climate change. Disasters and conflict that threaten their security to participate in the reconstruction of their countries and that impose barriers to realize their rights, have become more pressing than ever.

It is essential to effectively engage young people in decision-making on issues that affect their lives and their future. As we enter a decisive decade for the 2030 Agenda, the participation of young people in generating solutions and accelerating action around their priority areas will be crucial for achieving progress.

The UN General Assembly has put youth at the center of the celebration of the 75th Anniversary in 2020, by calling for an “inclusive, forward-looking and global youth-driven dialogue” on “The future we want, the UN we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism.” It is recognized that youth perspectives will be central to the renewal of multilateralism but also the success of the 2030 Agenda.
The Forum will further deepen the conversation from the Youth Plenary on the future of multilateralism and the role of youth in shaping the UN we need. It will also bring together young people around the theme of the HLPF by addressing the individual and collective actions that need to be taken in the next decade on the following themes that are proposed by the Secretary General for the global conversation:

- Impact of digital technologies and rapid technological change;
- Building and sustaining peace in a new era of conflict and violence;
- Inequality: bridging and rebalancing the economic and social divide;
- Climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation: A race we can win; and
- Shifting demographics: Young people on the move

In the regional breakout sessions, youth could be requested to identify bold solutions and transformative actions to accelerate progress for those SDGs that are priorities for their region. They could also consider those transformative “entry points” identified by the Global Sustainable Development Report considered by the 2019 HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly (SDG Summit).

Format

The Forum will include interactive plenary sessions with representatives from youth entities and organizations, Ministers responsible for youth, high-level and other keynote speakers on the emerging priority areas for the decade of action, as well as breakout sessions on the UN75 issue briefs, with a youth focus, and the regional priorities based on the SDG Summit’s Political Declaration. These sessions will be co-led by one to two UN organizations and youth entities. Budget permitting, use will be made of an app to allow all participants to express their views or answer questions during plenary sessions.

Participation

Participation in the ECOSOC Youth Forum is by invitation only and will include representatives from: a) youth-led and youth-focused organizations and entities selected through the United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices as well as the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY); b) regional youth platforms and international youth organizations that are members of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO); c) representatives of National Youth Councils and Institutes, as well as youth representatives from Civil Society Organizations and other youth leaders and advocates; d) Member States, including official youth delegates, Ministers and other high-level representatives and representatives of regional and other multilateral organizations.

The Forum will reflect the diversity of youth organizations and strive to a balanced representation of youth from all regions.

Preparation of the Youth Forum

The 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum will be convened by the President of ECOSOC and is co-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, and co-convened by the UN-MGCY and ICMYO. It is encouraged that preparations take place at the regional level prior to the ECOSOC Youth Forum, together with regional youth entities and platforms, to gather as wide a participation of youth-led and youth-focused organizations, as well as government representatives, as possible. The outcomes of these regional consultations should feed into the Youth Forum and subsequently to the other processes.
Social media and virtual participation

Virtual participation will be used to the greatest extent possible. The meeting will also be streamed live on UN WebTV and participants will be able to pose questions via social media through Facebook and Twitter (using #Youth2030). An SDG Media Zone will also be organized so participants at the Forum can engage in side-bar conversations about innovation and interventions aimed at strengthening the involvement of young people in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. It will also provide an opportunity for UN officials and government representatives to interact more directly with a young and diverse audience on a variety of social media platforms.

Outcome

The outcome of the Youth Forum will be a Presidential Statement, capturing key outcomes of the discussions and findings of the Forum, which will be made available to the ECOSOC High Level Segment, the High-level Political Forum in July and relevant meetings of the General Assembly in September 2020. A summary of the proceedings will also be prepared including specific recommendations which will also be shared with decision-makers. Consideration will be given to organize a dedicated space during the 10th edition of the ECOSOC Youth Forum aimed at reporting on the follow up, progress and/or delivery on key outcomes and recommendations from the 2020 ECOSOC Youth Forum, an exercise that shall be conducted annually in order to achieve greater coherence between the annual forums.