



**ECOSOC**  
**YOUTH FORUM**  
10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

**#YOUTH2030**

**10<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Council Youth Forum**  
**A Decade of Action: Building a Resilient Recovery**

**Plenary Session #YouthLead: Young People in the Driver's Seat to Build Back Better**

**(7 April 09:30-10:00)**

**Concept Note**

**Background:**

The devastating health, social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have affected different groups of society of all ages to varying degrees. Today's generation of young people is the largest generation in history, with young people constituting over 40% of the total global population. In the wake of the global pandemic in 2020, many of the existing issues impacting young people, including unemployment, education gaps, mental health, and more became exacerbated and even compounded with new challenges such as movement restrictions or virtual learning.

While the direct health impacts of the virus on young people has been lesser than that on other segments of society, the disruption caused by the pandemic will have disproportionately higher longer term impacts on them. The global pandemic has led to disruptions to the education system through school closures leading to over 1 billion learners in almost every country worldwide being impacted. Widespread national lockdowns largely contributed to the increase in unemployment levels amongst young people globally. The most vulnerable and marginalised youth were disproportionately affected and will take even longer to recover. These disruptions to life as we knew it also had domino effects on the mental health and wellbeing of young people and exacerbated a myriad of many other socio-economic challenges including human rights violations and domestic abuse. The digital divide has also meant that the increased online engagements further widen the gap between those who have access to the internet and digital tools and those with limited or no access.

Despite these challenges and the negative stereotypes associated with young people as spreaders instead of preventers of the Coronavirus, young people continue to demonstrate resilience and agility through voluntary service and community based interventions. There is a need to employ more community based, youth-led and intergenerational approaches to the response and recovery interventions to the pandemic. Approaches should also prioritise vulnerable youth populations and those left furthest behind, more especially in this decade of action and restoration as we get closer to the 2030 target of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Young people have the potential to bring innovative solutions and new perspectives to address the world's most pressing challenges. Building back better should be an intergenerational effort, due to the historical marginalisation of young people in decision making and leadership there is a need to amplify the voices of young people and better engage them in the implementation of measures that contribute to a better future for both people and the planet. Youth engagement and youth participation should move beyond tokenistic box ticking exercises to more equitable and sustainable youth centred approaches.

#### **Approach and objectives for this plenary session:**

Young people should be recognised as key stakeholders and strategic partners in Covid-19 recovery. There is a need for strong multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships that build and strengthen the capacity of young people to be at the forefront of, and play an active role in the planning and implementation of programmes and initiatives that shape what the post-Covid-19 realities will look like.

Governments and institutions alike have been forced to innovate their response and recovery plans to implement speedy, agile, and sometimes unconventional approaches to stop the spread of the virus but also to minimise negative long term societal consequences. While the youth development sector has seen cuts in funding, closures, and suspensions of programmes, some governments have set up youth Covid relief funds in places like the UK and New Zealand, while the World Health Organisation has invested in a Global Youth Mobilization to directly invest in youth-led recovery efforts.

These are some of the many positive steps in investing in young people in order to enable them to be at the driver's seat to creating a better, equitable and sustainable future, but after only 1 year into this pandemic, we have many lessons left to learn. In this particular session we will discuss:

1. Multidimensional, long term and irreversible impacts of Covid-19 on young people
2. How young people can spearhead Covid-19 response and recovery
3. The post-Covid-19 reality that young people want

4. Barriers to young people being being beneficiaries and meaningfully engaged active agents of Covid-19 response efforts throughout the process of planning & implementing COVID19 response, particularly
  - consultation during design stage
  - engagement as active agents on implementation
  - engagement in M&E post implementation)
5. Capacity building and capacity strengthening of young people to be better equipped to take effective and sustainable action

## **Speakers**

Moderator:

Ahmad Alhendawi, Secretary General, World Organization of the Scout Movement

Speakers:

H.E. Mr. Carlos Andres Alvarado Quesada, President of Costa Rica

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization

Ms. Nadine Khaouli, Co-Founder, Kafe be Kafak and Member of Generation 17

Ms. Chandra Tripura, Founder, Hill Resource Centre