



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM
10TH ANNIVERSARY

#YOUTH2030

10th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum **PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT**

A Decade of Action: Building a Resilient Recovery **7-8 April 2021**

The 10th Anniversary meeting of the Youth Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) took place in a virtual format on 7- 8 April 2021. This year, the Forum boasted the highest number of youth participants in 10 years.

Over 11,000 youth representatives and over 60 ministers and other High-level government representatives engaged in a dialogue across a variety of social media platforms on how best to respond to COVID-19 and move on a track to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) together with youth during the decade of action. The Forum also discussed how to ensure that the needs and priorities of youth are at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through plenary discussions and breakout sessions, the Council listened to a wide diversity of voices and ideas from young people across all regions and from all walks of life.

I am pleased to share some of the key messages and recommendations that emerged from our discussions during the Forum:

- We heard that ensuring a “green”, inclusive and just recovery from COVID-19 while leaving no youth behind is critical. We acknowledged the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and systemic and financial shortfalls across the globe, particularly in developing countries, and we discussed how youth has been particularly affected. We agreed that young people must be included in the governance mechanisms and institutions shaping the COVID-19 response and recovery. We also heard that young people in all their diversity are key drivers for the realization of the SDGs. Youth rights and priorities should orient the COVID-19 recovery efforts and national SDG implementation, follow-up and review.
- We stressed that the work of youth in the United Nations is reaching a turning point. The first-ever [Youth2030 Progress Report](#) launched at the Forum calls for accelerating the implementation of the youth strategy ([Youth2030](#)), ensuring its cohesive and transparent delivery and meaningfully engaging youth in decision-making and implementation. We need to fast-track changes in the UN for a future-focused reset on working with and for young people.
- We were also encouraged by the active role of young people in advocating for various innovative approaches. Where barriers exist, young people are creating informal structures and bolstering solidarity while taking the SDGs into “their own hands”. However, there is need to open up opportunities for them to participate in decision-making. Governments must include youth in the recovery plans and rebuilding process by

establishing permanent platforms for participation to advance youth rights, tackle the root causes of our climate and inequality crises as well as rethink our vision of progress and our economic and political systems.

- The UN needs to strengthen its youth participation mechanisms by creating new, fully inclusive, innovative, and safe spaces. Without young people, the Decade of Action will not yield sufficient results.
- We heard the concerns of young people that they have been disproportionately affected by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. They are navigating hardships arising from lost jobs, lost incomes and limited social protection. They feel at risk of being left further behind in education, economic opportunities and health and well being. Young people across all regions were particularly concerned about the mental health challenges that have increased exponentially during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- We acknowledged the need for the urgent transformation of health and food systems, making them more equitable, resilient and sustainable. Reducing discrimination and promoting the rule of law is also critical.
- In the past one year, the world has witnessed an upsurge in protests against systemic inequality, structural racism, discrimination as well as racial injustice and xenophobia. We were called to eliminate tendencies of discrimination, structural racism, xenophobia, and curb social media platforms that are being exploited to spread disinformation and hate speech against racial, ethnic, religious minorities and other vulnerable groups. We are also asked to end discriminatory citizenship laws with particular focus to the people living under foreign occupation.
- We were called on to create enabling environments for a sustainable socio-economic recovery, while keeping a youth-sensitive and inclusive approach to financial investments targeted at building prosperous and just societies for everyone. There is a need to broaden existing financial mechanisms and direct them to sectors that can boost efficient, green, resilient, inclusive and sustainable recovery.
- We must increase our efforts to work with all stakeholders to create and maintain safe spaces for young people to be meaningfully and inclusively engaged at all levels of policymaking, including through financial and political support. Minimizing the digital divide and enabling access to the Internet are also two key components to ensure access to safe digital spaces for young people to actively engage in global discussions related to peace, the rule of law and inclusion.
- We heard the call for young people to be included in partnerships of every size and scope. Guiding principles on how to engage in partnerships must be made available to youth. Meaningful intergenerational partnerships should be ensured.
- To better understand and address youth vulnerabilities – we must invest in quality and timely data, including age and gender -disaggregated data. This is especially important if we are to build an inclusive and resilient post-pandemic world. Enhanced data production and collection efforts need to include youth, for example, young researchers. In particular, data measuring the on-going state of youth mental health, including vulnerable youth, is required. This will help young people efforts to contribute to the effectiveness of mental health strategies implemented in their respective countries.
- We were strongly encouraged to invest more in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), information and communication technology infrastructure, robotics, artificial intelligence, drones and mechatronics. We were encouraged to put the right policies in place to boost creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship and to bolster university-led research. Young people are not just beneficiaries of programmes; they are agents of change and must be recognized as leaders, knowledge-holders (including indigenous knowledge) and innovators who contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. More recognition for youth-led innovations will promote a culture of solidarity and partnerships and support actions in communities.
- We must increase our efforts to promote youth volunteering and civic engagement. Those should be integrated into national recovery plans, to support the scaling up of recovery efforts, engage marginalized groups, and create opportunities for developing skills. Youth

volunteering can be transformed from a coping mechanism to a strategic resource for building communities' resilience, including youth-led sustainable local action for the SDGs.

- Youth centres, youth councils, and other self-organized platforms can foster South-South knowledge transfer to support the 2030 Agenda.
- We were inspired by the commitment by youth across all regions who strongly called for accelerated climate action. Youth are determined that our response to the pandemic does not jeopardize our efforts to combat climate or protect the environment. They insist that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how countries can lessen their carbon footprint. Countries therefore need to internalize the lessons learnt on these practices that have contributed to less pollutants.
- We were inspired by young people's proposals to rebuild broken systems that have not been working for them. Over the past two days, we have heard that COVID-19 has reminded us that life, health and relationships are precarious. It has revealed how the most vulnerable have suffered the most, and how our unbalanced approach to production, consumption and exploitation of our planet's resources is unsustainable. We have been inspired by the leadership, resilience, resourcefulness, and dedication of young people around the world. You have shown us that major crises can be turned into opportunities, that a more inclusive, sustainable and equitable future can be attainable, that resources can be repurposed to ensure better support to health systems and the most vulnerable. And that solutions can be co-envisioned and co-created intergenerationally.

We heard the strong appreciation expressed by young people for the space provided by the ECOSOC Youth Forum. We recognize that the virtual platform has opened up the possibilities for more engagement and more dialogue among young people, Member States and the ECOSOC system, and we recognize the need to maintain and nurture it. We will move forward, building on the achievements of the past ten years of ECOSOC Youth Forum, strengthening the voice and meaningful participation of young people in building sustainable and resilient societies while contributing to a more inclusive multilateralism that recognize the role of youth in our shared future.