



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM

YOUTH2030

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

"COVID-19 recovery: Youth taking action for a sustainable future"

CONCEPT NOTE

**REGIONAL SESSION ON
"NUTRITION AND SDGs: HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE HELP
FEED AFRICA?"**

20 April 2022, 9:45 AM – 11:15 AM

IDENTIFICATION	
SDG/theme or Region	AFRICA
Session title as per official EYF programme	AFRICA: "Nutrition and SDGs: How Can Young People Help Feed Africa?"
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BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

(approx. 500 words)

The theme for the 2022 UN ECOSOC Youth Forum Africa Regional Breakout Session, “**Nutrition and SDGs: How Can Young People Help Feed Africa?**”, is both relevant and timely as it encapsulates a most urgent African priority as enshrined in the 2022 theme of the African Union: “*Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent: Strengthening agro food systems, health and social protection systems for the acceleration of human, social and economic capital development*”. It also highlights the linkages between the 2022 African Union theme and the theme of the 2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum: “COVID-19 recovery: Youth taking action for a sustainable future”.

Three years ago, the UN Secretary-General called for a “Decade of Action” that would require proactive and transformative measures to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the loss of lives and livelihoods, increased poverty, reversed decades of hard-won developmental gains and threatens the achievement of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union’s Continental development blueprint, Agenda 2063. As of 4 April 2022, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Africa has registered over 11 million COVID-19 cases, representing 3 per cent of global cases, and over 250,000 deaths, representing 4.1 per cent of global deaths.

In 2003, African countries adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as a continental policy framework for agricultural transformation to increase food security and nutrition and reduce poverty. However, the 2019 progress report showed that Africa is not on track to end hunger by 2025. Currently there are 250 million food insecure people in Africa, a 44 million-person increase from 2014.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed the global health inequality but also the food security inequality. Nearly one out of five Africans experienced hunger in 2020, more than double the proportion of any other region. The most notable impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures have been disruptions in food systems across the continent, from production and supply to distribution and consumption. Travel restrictions, curfew hours and bans on gatherings, implemented particularly in the initial months of the pandemic, affected labour supply and access of agricultural produce to markets. This is exceptionally notable because 40 per cent of Africa’s food is imported.

The food security impacts of COVID-19 have included increased food losses and reductions in income levels for both large- and small-scale food producers, and small- and medium-size enterprises operating in the agri-food industry. This is very sobering because the agricultural industry in Africa has a massive social and economic footprint. More than 60 per cent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa are small holder

¹ Policy Brief: Africa and Food Security, OSAA, October 2021,
https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/2113589-policy-brief-on-food-security_web_rev2_19oct21_0.pdf

farmers and about 23 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) comes from agriculture, with some countries such as Sierra Leone in 2020 registering an agricultural contribution to GDP as high as 61 per cent, with Chad (48 per cent) and Liberia (43 per cent) not far behind.² This demonstrates that for African countries agriculture represents an important source of livelihoods, employment and nutrition.

It is an urgent time for a rethinking, a paradigm shift in terms of agriculture, emphasizing resilience and involving both new and traditional actors to be able to feed Africa and eliminate hunger by 2025. Some of the devastating effects of hunger, malnutrition and undernutrition are stunting, wasting and underweight. Malnutrition continues to affect a significant proportion of Africa's population, in particular young children under the age of five. Stunting is the most common form of malnutrition across Africa. Undernourishment and poor diet quality are two of the most direct causes of stunting and other forms of undernutrition. The Global Nutrition Report 2021 states that the prevalence of stunting among African children below age 5 is 30.7 percent, higher than the global average of 22 percent and at risk of both short- and long-term adverse effects³. Additionally, 7 million children were underweight and 2.5 million were wasted during the same period. Malnutrition has negative effects on human development including health and education in children and reduced productivity in adulthood, which in turn affects employment and income. In this regard, malnutrition thus contributes to entrenching poverty and undermining the achievement of the SDGs and the Agenda 2063 priorities.

A good example of new thinking is UNESCO's unique network of designated sites, particularly the 86 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in sub-Saharan Africa which play a crucial role to demonstrate local solutions to global challenges such as food security, biodiversity loss, and climate change. As 'learning places for sustainable development' biosphere reserves are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems.

Against this background, home-grown school-feeding programmes have been increasingly implemented by African countries to address malnutrition problems and support local communities. Today, over 65 million African children benefit from these programmes. The "home-grown" approach promoted by the UN system and the African Union implies that school-feeding programmes do not only provide vital support for health and nutrition needs of children and youth, but also help to promote local economies and strengthen local food systems. To this end UN-OSAA is part of the School Meals Coalition that promotes school-feeding and is about to launch an initiative "A pen for a gun" that promotes the role of school feeding in promoting social cohesion and peace on the continent.

For Africa, leveraging nutrition will be key to successfully reversing the devastating trend of hunger, malnutrition, undernutrition, stunting, wasting and loss of livelihoods, as well as contribute to eliminating poverty to achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2063 for the full realization of the 'Africa We Want'.

² Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP), World Bank national accounts data and OECD National Accounts data files, World Bank Open Data (<https://data.worldbank.org/>)

³ (<https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/#:~:text=The%20prevalence%20of%20stunting%20is,the%20global%20average%20of%206.7%25.>)

SESSION OBJECTIVES

(approx. 100 words)

The 2022 UN ECOSOC Youth Forum Africa Regional Breakout Session will seek among others to amplify the voices of African youth, providing them with a safe space and platform to deliberate on challenges and solutions related to the implementation of the CAADP, SDG Goal 2, Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1, the elimination of hunger, sustainably increasing productivity, building resilience in terms of Africa feeding its own citizens. It will seek to highlight the potential of youth to drive inclusive agricultural transformation and sustainable development as well as encourage and promote the urgency to increase youth representation and active participation in building back better to achieve the SDGs. It will also promote discussion on the theme and the SDGs under review to mitigate bottlenecks and encourage the sea change that will be necessary to achieve the ‘Decade of Action’.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

(approx. 100 words)

The 2022 UN ECOSOC Youth Forum Africa Regional Breakout Session will contribute to the review of the implementation of the SDGs and shape policy recommendations at the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and other intergovernmental forums, including the UN Transforming Education Summit, the UN Ocean Conference, and the Financing for Development Forum. The summary outcome of the UN ECOSOC Youth Forum is considered as an informal contribution to the annual HLPF, and key elements are referenced in the annual Ministerial Declaration. At the end of the Africa Regional Breakout Session, a summary of salient points will be compiled to feed into the closing remarks of the UN ECOSOC President. UN-OSAA and UNECA will prepare the report of the Breakout Session, which will be widely distributed by UN DESA (through the UN ECOSOC Youth Forum website) and whose conclusions and recommendations shall inform the summary outcome document of the overall UN ECOSOC Youth Forum and the HLPF. For advocacy purposes, an e-publication will be developed and distributed widely through the partners networks on the continent.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(approx. 100 words)

The UN ECOSOC Youth Forum, Africa Break-Out Session will be a virtual event and will be structured as an interactive session, featuring Ministers of Youth, Senior Government Officials, UN Member States, Parliamentarians, Policy Makers, Academia, think tanks, Civil society, NGOs, youth representatives from Africa and the diaspora and moderated by a prominent African youth representative. Youth representatives will address questions prepared for the session and share experiences and lesson learned, and this will be followed by questions received from the audience. The showcased examples of meaningful youth actions will provide a set of good practices for possible replication and adaptation in other relevant countries. The event is open to all and especially encourages the participation of African youth. The session will have English French-Arabic-Portuguese simultaneous interpretation as well sign language. It will be webcast through UN Web TV to allow a wide range of participants to follow, to ensure inclusivity and to leave no one behind.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

(approx. 200 words)

The 2022 UN ECOSOC Youth Forum Africa Regional Breakout Session will be held virtually on 20 April 2022 and will last 90 minutes. It will be organized by UN-OSAA and UNECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Union Special Youth Envoy, and UN entities, including UNESCO, UNDP, UNV, UNMGCY, as co-organizers. The Session will be moderated by a prominent youth leader from the continent, who will stimulate the discussion and ensures that it is interactive and solutions-oriented, with participation from youth representatives from Africa and the diaspora. The moderator will provide a short introductory statement and outline the guiding questions for the interactive session. She will ensure that participants can share examples of challenges, successful experiences and key recommendations. The Session, at its conclusion, will solicit a set of commitments from the participants towards implementing the SDGs under review. Before the 2023 Africa Regional Breakout Session, a request for updates will be sent out to stakeholders and participants who will have committed to implement solutions to move forward the SDGs in their constituencies. Their feedback will be captured under the report called the ‘One Year Later Series’, which are good practices and lessons learned shared with the possibility for replication by other youth based on country/regional context. It shall constitute the closing section of each year’s Africa Regional Breakout Session. The session is designed to be interactive, with no prepared statements to encourage inclusivity.

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(approx.100 words)

1. What kind of incentives and support do young people need to invest in agriculture and farming, to ensure higher agricultural productivity and yields?
2. How can agro business and farming be made a strong part of the educational curricula?
3. How can youth investments in agriculture and agro business accelerate implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063?
4. Africa imports roughly 40 per cent of its food. What concrete means can young people seek to this trend, thus eliminate food insecurity, hunger and eliminating poverty, and enhancing Africa’s resilience to external shocks?
5. What is the role of government and policy makers in creating an enabling environment to increase youth participation in agriculture?
6. How can Science Technology and Innovation and the use of data systems such as the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSN NET) be enhanced to increase resilience and avert instances of famine?
7. How can volunteerism and volunteers be leveraged to build capacities and implement initiatives geared at enhancing food security and nutritional education?
8. How can youth activities in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves contribute to food security?
9. About 62% of African Women are involved in farming yet only 22% are agricultural scientist, how can increased women participation and leadership increase yields, boost productivity, eliminate hunger and reduce poverty as well as ensure gender equality?
10. How can school feeding programmes be a driver to eradicate malnutrition whilst promoting social cohesion and peace in Africa?

NAMES AND EMAILS OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

- Moderator: Gogontlejang Phaladi Youth leader
- Panelist: Ms. Cristina Duarte, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary-General on Africa, (UN OSAA).
- Panelist: H.E. Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC).
- President of United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC)
- Panelist: H.E. Rosemary Mbabazi, Minister of Youth and Culture, Rwanda (East Africa)
- Panelist: Ms. Chido Mpemba, African Union Special Youth Envoy (Southern Africa)
- Panelist: Mr. Samuel Abrokwa, Young Ghanaian agricultural Entrepreneur (West Africa)
- Panelist: Mr. Loay Radwan, UN Young Leader for the SDGs, CEO and Co-founder, G-Beetle, Environmental Engineer (Egypt, North Africa)

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

(approx. 300 words)

Preparatory meetings have been held and will continue leading up to the 2022 UN ECOSOC Youth Forum, Africa Break-Out Session with a wide range of stakeholders including the African Union Special Youth Envoy, UNECA, UNESO, UNDP, UNDGC, UNV, Child Solidarity Group, UN Major Group on Children and Youth, Youth Hub Africa to ensure inclusivity and to make the session Africa youth-centric. Preparatory meetings are held with youth and youth representatives to garner ideas, proposals, and solutions.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF SESSION FOR OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

(50 to 75 words)

The 2022 UN ECOSOC Youth Forum Africa Regional Breakout Session has been an annual flagship and signature interactive roundtable forum of the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UN OSAA) since 2015. This session is an annual signature Africa-centric youth forum at the global level. It provides a direct, interactive and unique platform for young Africans and stakeholders to interact, discuss, foster peer learning and share ideas and best practices to mitigate challenges and provide innovative, transformative, scalable, inclusive and impactful solutions to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the “Africa We Want” as encapsulated in the African Union Agenda 2063. The Session has brought together almost 200 in-person attendees per session in recent years, including Member States, youth delegates, policymakers, ministers, senior government officials, parliamentarians, development actors, UN officials, academics and researchers, as well as virtual participants who participate directly from the continent.

POTENTIAL KEY MESSAGES FOR ECOSOC PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT
(only in final version of concept note)
(100words)

1. The “home-grown” approach promoted by the UN system and the African Union clearly demonstrates that school-feeding programmes not only provide vital support for the health and nutrition needs of African children and youth, but also help to promote local economies and strengthen local food systems as well as promote peace and social cohesion.
2. Home-grown school-feeding programmes have been increasingly implemented by African countries as a solution to address malnutrition challenges and support local communities and today over 65 million African children benefit from these programmes.
3. The full implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is crucial for agricultural transformation to increase food security and nutrition and reduce poverty.
4. African youth should be commended for having shown exceptional ingenuity to mitigate the devastating effects of COVID-19 and have launched more than 120 health related technology innovations. These technologies were used in surveillance, contact tracing, community engagement, laboratory systems, as well as in infection control. This demonstrates a fertile ground for job and wealth creation for Africans with a potential to facilitate implementation of SDGs and create peaceful and resilient communities.
5. Science, technology and innovation can be drivers to delivering on Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the SDG, especially on ending poverty and hunger, and providing quality education.
6. If African countries want to break the cycle of poverty and achieve the SDGs, they have to set up ambitious national targets and invest heavily in technology. While some countries set a target of 1% of their GDP to research and development, those with strong and effective Science, Technology and Innovation systems invest up to 3.5% of their GDP.
7. Gender equality is key to ensuring that Africa eliminates hunger and malnutrition, create jobs, eliminate poverty and contribute to inclusive sustainable development.

SUGGESTED READING

- The African Youth Charter
- The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- The African Union Agenda 2063
- Agenda 2063-First Ten-year Implementation Plan 2014-2023
- African Continental Framework on Youth Development
- African Union Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth Employment (2019-2028)
- United Nations World Youth Report 2020
- [What are Biosphere Reserves? \(unesco.org\)](https://www.unesco.org/en/biosphere-reserves)