



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 "CARIBBEAN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AND A FAIR RESPONSE TO COVID-19"

20 April 2022, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

IDENTIFICATION	
SDG/theme or Region	Latin America and the Caribbean
Session co-lead UN	ECLAC
Session co-lead Youth	Commonwealth Youth Council
Session co-organizers (both UN and Youth)	UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, Commonwealth Youth Council, Caribbean Regional Youth Council (CRYC), UNFPA Youth Advisory Board
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>The multidimensional impact and intensification of pre-existing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic on youth over the past two years have been widely discussed in various ECLAC studies and seminars. These include gaps in access to education and school dropout, employability, mental health due to extensive periods of confinement, perspectives on the future, further marginalization of young women, among others. These circumstances surely put current and future children and youth at risk—</p>	

the same generations that have a critical role in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda in the region and in the recovery process.

In the lead up to the 2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum, a series of activities are being delivered to extend the dialogue with and for youth in Latin America and the Caribbean so as to create further opportunities to gather their opinions, expertise and recommendations on the five SDGs under review at the next High-Level Political Forum, namely SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

Key issues

Education Youth Want and Need (SDG 4)

The attainment of SDG 4 is facing various uncertainties, with new and amplified challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are, on the one hand, positive trends and reduction of structural gaps, such as the increase in the years of education of the population and the increase in access to the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels, particularly for girls and young women, for lower income quintiles of the population and children and for youth in rural areas. On the other hand, however, some indicators have stagnated and even deteriorated, such as the completion and quality assessment of secondary education and the alarming increase in gaps in the access to tertiary education.

To control the spread of the COVID-19 virus, face-to-face classes were partially or entirely interrupted at all educational levels. Latin America and the Caribbean have the most prolonged period of interruption, 56 weeks on average until September 2021 (more than one academic year). The education disruption revealed and deepened existing inequalities, increasing dropout rates and learning losses and affecting young people's mental health and well-being. Indeed, the impact of the pandemic on students under vulnerable conditions, such as students with disabilities, migrants or students from indigenous communities requires urgent mitigation measures. Education is essential to enter the workforce under decent conditions, build citizens who actively engage on critical social and environmental issues, and achieve other SDGs. Therefore, inclusive quality education should be at the centre of the recovery efforts by leaving no youth behind.

Generation Equality: Building back better with young women and girls at the centre (SDG 5)

Gender inequalities have structural roots in Latin America and the Caribbean and are fundamentally linked to the region's development model and the sexual division of work. The development model produces and reproduces inequality leaving women overrepresented in the economic sectors characterized by low-wage employment and limited access to social protection. The sexual division of work, on the other hand, limits female participation in the economic and public spheres by making women mainly responsible for domestic and care work. Broadly, there are four structural nodes of gender inequality limiting the economic, physical and decision-making autonomy of girls and women: (i) poverty and socioeconomic inequality, (ii) patriarchal values and the culture of privilege, (iii) the sexual division of work and care, and (iv) the concentration of power and the hierarchical relations in the public sphere.

The nature of the crisis and the confinement measures implemented to respond to the spread of the virus increased the burden of care work among girls, adolescents and women, as well as their exposure to situations of violence and abuse within their households. At the same time, the restrictions on mobility made it difficult to seek help and access services and safety nets. Moreover, given the difficulties in accessing appropriate, timely and quality health care, the pandemic has accentuated the gaps in the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights. In sum, the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened long-term gender inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean, deterring the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Life below water and Youth: Connecting generations to protect our Ocean (SDG 14)

The ocean is the planet's largest biosphere and climate regulator. It covers 70% of the earth's surface and absorbs 25% of all CO₂ emissions and 90% of the heat from the emissions. The integrity of marine-coastal ecosystems is critical for the well-being and sustainability of people's livelihoods through its role in providing food and energy, sustaining economic activities such as tourism, fishing and marine gathering, and confronting climate change. However, there is little acknowledgement of its importance: pollution and overfishing, along with climate change, pose a significant threat to marine and coastal ecosystems.

The situation of mangrove forests, located along the tropical coastline and crucial for terrestrial and marine life, is particularly worrying. The region is home to almost a quarter of the world's mangroves, distributed mainly in coastal areas of its intertropical zone. They absorb 90% of the energy of the sea waves and protect against storms, giving security to coastal populations through their role in mitigating the effects of hurricanes and storms, reducing their financial, infrastructure and human lives costs. Moreover, they are very effective in carbon sequestration, harbouring almost three times the amount maintained in temperate forests, and provide space for recreation and ecotourism. Unfortunately, however, this resource has been undervalued and is in danger, due to significant losses in Latin America and the Caribbean and South and Southeast Asia.

Life on Land (SDG 15)

There is no other region in the world with a higher average number of tons of biomass per hectare than Latin America and the Caribbean (50% higher than the world average). This figure shows the high quality of the forests in the region, generally with a multi-layered structure and enormous biodiversity, in species and life forms. The region's forests also stand out for their relevance as a carbon sink and their role in stabilizing the world's climate and hydrological cycles, among many other ecosystem services. Unfortunately, the region has witnessed rapid deforestation, resulting in loss of 138 million hectares in the last 30 years, which is equivalent, for example, to more than half of the size of Argentina.

Although deforestation rates have slowed in the region, forests remain in danger. In 15 countries, deforestation has increased in the last decade, threatening indigenous territories and livelihoods and pushing environments to a critical point of disturbance that can affect their capacity to recuperate. The main driver of deforestation in the region is the expansion of the agricultural and livestock frontier motivated by the high income associated with export products. At the same time, the impacts of

climate change are growing, the frequency of disasters, such as forest fires, is increasing, pollution levels are worsening, and species extinction is growing. These trends have profound consequences for our planet's ecological integrity and people's lives, including many vulnerable young people, since ecosystems with high diversity reduce the possibility of diseases contagion to humans. Therefore, there is an increase in the risk of new outbreaks of zoonotic diseases and pandemics.

Financing our Future (SDG 17)

Building back better and fairer from COVID-19 will require a strengthened global partnership that reduces risk, enables recovery and builds resilience—with a particular focus on the needs of youth and future generations. Despite inflation and other pressures, sustainable recovery requires targeted, high-impact sustained financing and investment in future generations. Non-financial investments, including capacity building, will also be critical to the long-term sustainability of recovery efforts.

In particular, efforts to mitigate the short- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic require an unprecedented level of collaboration. We have seen many positive contributions from young people during the pandemic, which need to be made visible. Young people support the most vulnerable people in their communities and help save lives: even in situations of a shortage of protective equipment, young health professionals risk their lives on the front lines of the pandemic. They also support the most vulnerable people in their communities. They must be acknowledged as key actors in the process of building a cohesive and inclusive social pact focused on well-being and rights in the context of the recovery process of the prolonged crisis.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Provide space for young people of the LAC region to express their recommendations, insights and expertise on pressing needs and issues, especially those related to SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17.
2. Showcase the youth engagement processes in preparation for the fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and the ECOSOC Youth Forum LAC Regional Table with the 2022 HLPF theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.
3. Follow up on regional youth consultation efforts towards the implementation and review processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the recovery process from the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Reflect on the role of National Youth Policies as potential SDGs accelerators during the Decade of Action.
5. Create an interactive platform between youth and Member States to promote meaningful youth engagement in the revision, implementation and follow up process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. LAC children, adolescents and youth recommendations and voices are shared with Member States, UN Agencies and forum participants.
2. Dialogue with Member States regarding the ways they are including young people in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the response to COVID 19.
3. The preparatory regional youth consultations process is presented.
4. Promote further articulation with Member States for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Latin America, the approach used was based on regional children, adolescents and youth consultations and preparatory activities that included a LAC CAY Forum where the participants shared their concerns, recommendations and contributions in the frame of the SDGs under review.

In the Caribbean, a series of Youth Dialogues were held where young people of the subregion engaged policy makers and experts in examining themes aligned with the SDGs under review via discussions and presentations. The perspectives and outcomes of these dialogues will feed into the Caribbean regional breakout session of this year's ECOSOC Youth Forum.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

Time	Activity	Presenters
5 mins	Welcome and introduction	Bernice Antoine, UNFPA Youth Advisor, Trinidad and Tobago (Moderator)
20 mins	Presentation of the outcomes of the Caribbean Dialogue Sessions	<p><u>Quality and Inclusive Education in the Caribbean</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amber Sybesma, 12th UNESCO Youth Forum Participant, Aruba <p><u>Gender perspectives in the recovery process post-COVID-19</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sapphire Alexander, Advisor to the Global Advisory Committee for the Caribbean region at FRIDA, The Young Feminist Fund; Global Advisory Committee for the United Nations Girls Education Initiative

		<p>(UNGEI)</p> <p><u>The role of youth in Caribbean blue futures – targeting SDG 14</u> Zana Kristen Wade, Ocean and Climate Youth Ambassador, Belize.</p> <p><u>Life on Earth and Caribbean Youth Environmental Action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ferdison Valmond, Kalinago Inspirators Youth Group, Dominica
15 mins	Discussions	Moderated by Bernice Antoine, UNFPA Youth Advisor, Trinidad and Tobago
45 mins	<p>The way forward</p> <p>This segment would focus on participants' recommendations and inputs (using 3/4 guidance discussion questions)</p>	<p>Facilitated by Franz George, Caribbean and Americas Regional Representative, Commonwealth Youth Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jhannel Thomlinson, Caribbean Youth Environment Network (panellist) Shane John, Commonwealth Youth Council, Trinidad and Tobago (panellist) Ayesha Constable, Young People for Action on Climate Change, Jamaica (panellist)
5 mins	Conclusions	Franz George, Caribbean and Americas Regional Representative, Commonwealth Youth Council

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the main challenges for youth in the LAC region around the SDGs under review?
- What are the main recommendations from youth to Member States to address the challenges identified?
- How do young people in the LAC region want to be included in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs under review? and what are the contributions or actions youth are making in the territories?

- How are Member States including young people meaningfully in the implementation of the SDGs under review?
- Why is it important for Member States to include youth in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and response to COVID 19?

NAMES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

- Bernice Antoine, UNFPA Youth Advisor, Trinidad and Tobago
- Ferdison Valmond, Kalinago Inspirators Youth Group, Dominica
- Franz George, Caribbean and Americas Regional Representative, Commonwealth Youth Council
- Jhannel Thomlinson, Caribbean Youth Environment Network
- Shane John, Commonwealth Youth Council, Trinidad and Tobago
- Ayesha Constable, Young People for Action on Climate Change, Jamaica

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, the following preparatory activities have taken place:

1. Informative session on 24 January at 10:00 a.m. Lima time, with the objective of sharing with the youth of the region the scope of the prioritized SDGs. <https://bit.ly/3BdIM9L>
2. Virtual consultation for Latin American and Caribbean Youth on the road to the 5th Session of the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development and the 11th ECOSOC Youth Forum, will be available from 9 February to 5 April 2022 and will gather the opinions and recommendations of the region's youth. <https://bit.ly/3J7GueM>
3. In the Caribbean, in preparation of the Regional Youth Forum, a series of [Subregional Youth Dialogues](#) were held on 23 and 24 February 2022 and attended by 117 participants from 22 Caribbean countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago).
4. Latin American and Caribbean Youth Forum 2030: Road to the 5th Session of the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development and the 11th ECOSOC Youth Forum, held on 4 March 2022. <https://bit.ly/3GEIsD7>
5. Youth Side Event, 5th Session of the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development, 9 March 2022. <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2022/en/programme/towards-economic-and-social-council-youth-forum-latin-american-and-caribbean-perspectives>

SUGGESTED READING

General:

- A. Outcomes of the Caribbean Youth Dialogues
- B. Outcomes of the Latin American Youth Dialogue
- C. First and Second United Nations Survey on Latin American and Caribbean Youth in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- D. Outcomes of the regional online consultation (1st cut)
- E. Statement of the Children, Adolescent and Youth Group Towards the Forum

SDG 4:

- A. UNESCO/CEPAL Regional Report on SDG 4 (to be launched)
- B. La educación en tiempos de la pandemia de COVID-19
- C. Education during the COVID-19 pandemic: Access, inclusion and psychosocial support
- D. Diversificación de la estructura de la escuela secundaria y segmentación educativa en América Latina

SDG 5:

- A. La autonomía económica de las mujeres en la recuperación sostenible y con igualdad
- B. Los riesgos de la pandemia de COVID-19 para el ejercicio de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos de las mujeres
- C. La pandemia del COVID-19 profundiza la crisis de los cuidados en América Latina y el Caribe
- D. Estrategia de Montevideo para la Implementación de la Agenda Regional de Género en el Marco del Desarrollo Sostenible hacia 2030

SDGs 14 and 15:

- A. Acuerdo de Escazú: Acuerdo Regional sobre el Acceso a la Información, la Participación Pública y el Acceso a la Justicia en Asuntos Ambientales en América Latina y el Caribe

SDG 17:

A. Pactos políticos y sociales para la igualdad y el desarrollo sostenible en América Latina y el Caribe en la recuperación pos-COVID-19

B. Building forward better: Action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Fourth report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean
<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46696-building-forward-better-action-strengthen-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

To join the session: https://cepal-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VJkryjvRDq75Sd1Q4ggWA