



**ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM**

YOUTH2030

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

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

CONCEPT NOTE

THEMATIC SESSION ON "SECURING A SUSTAINABLE LIFE ON LAND – SDG 15"

19 April 2022, 3:15 PM – 4:45 PM

IDENTIFICATION	
SDG/theme or Region	SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Session co-lead UN	UN Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFFS/DESA)
Session co-lead Youth	Global Youth Biodiversity Network
Session co-organizers	FAO, UNDP, UNEP
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>The 2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum theme "COVID-19 recovery: Youth taking action for a sustainable future", addresses the ECOSOC and 2022 HLPF theme of "Building back better from COVID- 19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." As part of the EYF thematic sessions on the SDGs under review at the HLPF, the Forum will review progress towards SDG 15 - life on land and consider the role of youth.</p>	

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call, representing a once in-a-lifetime opportunity to shift global development towards greater sustainability, transitioning to a low carbon, resilient, resource efficient, nature positive, and socially inclusive economy. Increasing efforts to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15) is critical to building back better, and is the basis for a more resilient and sustainable future for all. In this regard, young people have a vital role as changemakers, in turning global commitments into action on the ground, acting to protect nature and the planet and promoting nature-based solutions to benefit people and the planet.

Our life-support systems on land, freshwater and marine ecosystems are under severe and growing pressure from human activities. The impacts of climate change are growing – from rising temperatures to extreme weather events. The frequency of disasters is increasing, from forest fires and storms to floods and droughts. Pollution levels are worsening, and species extinction is increasing. This has profound consequences for the ecological integrity of our planet and for the lives of people, including many vulnerable young people.

The main driver behind degradation of terrestrial ecosystems is unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Global economies are grounded in nature, for goods like food, energy and raw materials, and ecosystem services like water filtration, pollination, and climate regulation. The global COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder that building back better requires ensuring the health of the planet, and this begins with changing consumption and production patterns. Zoonotic diseases tend to emerge when natural landscapes are degraded, from resource extraction, large-scale deforestation, illegal trade in wildlife, and climate change. Pursuing circular economy approaches as a pathway for achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns can contribute to addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, water stress, pollution and human health impacts, thus contributing to the SDGs and other internationally agreed goals and commitments including the Global Forest Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement, amongst others.

Young activists, scientists, practitioners are active partners in global efforts to sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and land degradation, halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. Through their direct work and by engaging with Governments and other partners, young people are accelerating the transition towards sustainable ways of living and low carbon, resilient, resource efficient and nature positive economies. Young people have a vested interest in ensuring that the health of the planet and its ecosystems are at the core of all plans and policies to build back better. They can amplify and increase the reach and impact of major international initiatives - from the One Health approach to ensuring the health of ecosystems and people, to the Secretary-General's global initiatives on "Turning the Tide on Deforestation", "Climate Action", and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. They can be part of actions to support the most vulnerable groups such as youth living in slums or human settlements exposed to pollution and natural disasters.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

The SDG 15 thematic session will provide a platform for interactive discussion on best practices, lessons learned, solutions as well as creative and innovative ideas regarding:

- How young people are creating change through contributing to protect biodiversity and restoring ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combatting desertification and reversing land degradation.
- What kind of support young people need to strengthen their engagement in global efforts to halt deforestation, take climate action and promote ecosystem restoration.
- How to promote more meaningful youth participation in shaping decisions of relevance to achieving SDG 15 and to building back better from COVID-19.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A constructive and inspiring dialogue on actions young people have taken to support progress towards SDG 15 and COVID-19 recovery during the SDG Decade of Action and Delivery.
- Identifying what kinds of policy support and measures are needed to strengthen the meaningful participation of youth in recovery measures and in advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 15.
- Raising awareness of how renewed commitment, political support and accelerated action towards SDG 15 is essential to building back better and transition to a low emission, resource efficient, nature positive, and socially inclusive economy.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the short duration of the SDG 15 thematic session, and in order for the discussions to be more focused and structured, consultations will be undertaken via a survey conducted by the Youth and UN co-leads and co-organizers in the lead up to the Youth Forum. A compilation of the input gathered from the survey will be shared at the session by the lead discussants, to form the basis for concrete contributions and recommendations from the session.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

The session will be held in the format of a virtual interactive discussion, with a moderator and lead discussants who will engage in a live dialogue with the participants.

- Opening remarks by the Director of the UNFF Secretariat, DESA who will welcome participants and provide a brief overview of the key issues.
- Lead discussants will present the compilation of input received from the survey and share some of their experiences and insights from their own work.
- Moderator will share the guiding questions and expectations.
- The session will be an open discussion led by the Moderator.
- Closing remarks and oral summary by the Moderator or Lead Discussants.

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What best practices, lessons learned, solutions as well as creative and innovative ideas are emerging regarding:

- How young people are contributing to implementing SDG 15, supporting COVID-19 recovery and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner?
- How to support and strengthen meaningful youth participation in shaping decisions of relevance to achieve SDG 15 and building back better from COVID-19?
- How to enhance cooperation and coordination within the UN system and beyond to strengthen youth contributions in progress towards SDG 15 and COVID-19 recovery?

NAMES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Moderator

- Xuan Zihan, Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY), and Regional Youth Focal Point (Eastern and South-Eastern Asia), United Nations International Federation of Youth (UN1FY) for Water and Climate

Opening Remarks

- Ms. Juliette Biao, Director, UN Forum on Forests Secretariat

Lead Discussants:

- Anpothowin Jensen, Oglala Lakota Nation
- Maximo Mazzocco, Founder, Eco House (Argentina)
- Mi Hongxu, Ecological Protection Section, Yinggeling Branch, Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park Administration (China)
- Joshua Amaitum, International Forestry Students' Association (Uganda)
- Malaika Vaz, National Geographic Society

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY CONSULTATION

Preparatory consultations will be via written input from a survey conducted by the Youth and UN co-leads and co-organizers in the lead up to the Youth Forum. The survey will be shared by the co-leads and co-organizers with their respective youth focal points and networks. A compilation of the input gathered from the survey will be shared at the session by the lead discussants, to form the basis for concrete contributions and recommendations from the session.