**Economic and Social Council Youth Forum**

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

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**THEMATIC SESSION ON**

“YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSFORMING EDUCATION – SDG 4”

19 April 2022, 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDENTIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| SDG/theme or Region | Quality Education (SDG 4)  
1:30 – 3:00 pm (19 April 2022) |
| Session co-lead UN | UNESCO, Lily Gray  
UNESCO, Elisabetta Caporaso  
UNESCO, Vivian Leung  
UNESCO, Victoria Ibiwoye  
UNESCO, Cameron Camillo  
UNESCO, Maria Kypriotou |
| Session co-lead Youth | UNMGCY, Loes van der Graaf  
UNMGCY, Alicja Lelwic  
UNMGCY, Miriam Samira Aber |
| Session co-organizers (both UN and Youth) | UNFPA, Peter Mandelov  
UNFPA, Danielle Engel |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNFPA, Cecile Mazzacurati</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNCTAD, Raymond Landveld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCTAD, Arlette Verploegh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCTAD, Chantal Line Carpentier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN WOMEN, Ritah Muyambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR, Arash Bordbar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR, Scott Pohl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR, Eunhye Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IESALC, Jose Antonio Quinteiro Goris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPE, Boyeoluwatito Foluyinka Fakoya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPE, Sirtaj Kaur LNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHCHR, Elena Ippoiliti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHCHR, Paulina Tandiono</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES**

Education is key in driving progress across all SDGs and enabling young people to prepare for entry into the workforce and actively engage on critical social and environmental issues that affect them. The prolonged and repeated class and school closures during 2020 and 2021 have resulted in leaving many of the education-related targets of the SDGs well off track. This global learning crisis is depriving hundreds of millions of children and young people of their right to quality education with increased drop-out rates, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable and marginalized students and young people, particularly girls. Investments in education improve health outcomes, build human capital, reduce poverty and inequality, combat violence and extremism, and boost earnings. Yet confronted with young and growing populations, high rates of poverty and inequality – and compounded by the impacts of COVID-19 – many governments in lower-income countries lack the resources they need to get all children in school and learning. This learning crisis is further exacerbated by the broader challenges relating to the ability of conventional education systems to deliver the knowledge, skills and outcomes needed for children, young people and adults to excel in today’s world and contribute to sustainable, healthy and peaceful futures.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the risks that arise when young people do not have access to (technological) resources and the appropriate education and training to unlock their innovative potential. As digital technologies continue to open up a world of new opportunities, many youth from lower income countries still require access to the internet as well as the right skill-set necessary to leverage new digital technologies to improve their livelihoods and solve urgent social, economic and environmental challenges at community level. Education institutions and professional development initiatives need to equip young people with transferable skills, offer apprenticeships and mentorship opportunities, as well as foster innovative spirit to keep up with the needs of the changing job market. For young people to seize the benefits of the new digital era ahead, providing resilient and high-quality education environments where innovation, best practices and creativity are nurtured need to become an integral part of new learning ecosystems.
Educational efforts fostering respect, equality, inclusion, solidarity and participation, empower young persons to uphold their rights and those of others; equip individuals belonging to groups which historically faced discrimination and exclusion with the necessary knowledge and skills to become leaders for positive change in their communities; and prevent violence by proposing solutions to chronic and emerging problems, including poverty, violent conflict and discrimination, consistent with human rights principles. Youth are rights holders and key actors in realizing human rights, achieving sustainable development, securing peace and preventing violence and conflict. The inclusive participation of young people in shaping and implementing educational policies that affect them is essential. This is why, to be effective, human rights and global citizenship education efforts must engage young people as key partners at all stages: planning, design, implementation and follow-up, as well as regular monitoring and evaluation.

The SDG4Youth network engages and strengthens young people's voices in relevant global discussion on quality education for all, placing them at the centre of SDG4 in shaping global education policies and transforming education to help build just, equitable and sustainable futures. The network's working groups are creating an ecosystem in which young people will be listened to, consulted, mobilized and supported in the reimagining of education systems. The primary goal of these working groups is to address tokenistic youth engagement that has been the status quo in education frameworks. Members of these working groups are actively working towards shaping the action tracks for consequential education forums such as the Transforming Education Summit 2022. The SDG4Youth Network will leverage its Youth Statement to highlight youth education priorities, innovative youth led solutions and recommendation to stakeholders.

The 2022 Annual Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum will provide a platform for youth and students to address the need for meaningful youth engagement. This session will provide a safe space for young people to share their perspectives on how to transform education amidst the continuing crisis. The session will highlight the focus areas for the network's working groups. It will further reiterate the need to support and build upon existing youth-led solutions to improve the accessibility and equity of education.

**SESSION OBJECTIVES**

This session aims to highlight the role of youth engagement in enhancing the quality of formal and informal education. Existing youth-led solutions that transform education and their impacts on local, national, and regional communities will be showcased in this session. The skills and knowledge that young people need to effectively contribute to human rights, sustainable development, a culture of peace and non-violence, respect for diversity and global citizenship will be discussed, as well as challenges and opportunities to develop and deliver related educational programmes. Proposed strategies on how youth engagement can be strengthened to reshape formal and informal education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be shared and discussed. Strategies to increase and improve youth advocacy for education financing and inclusive education will be shared. The purpose of this
segment is to reiterate the need to support and build upon existing youth-led solutions to improve the accessibility and equity of education and to accelerate progress on SDG 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Primary outcomes**

1. Raise awareness about youth and student priorities to ensure that education systems are inclusive, future-proof, sustainable, safe, and backed by education policy, financing, and infrastructure
2. Raise awareness about existing youth-led solutions that are transforming informal and formal education
3. Discuss and propose strategies to strengthen youth engagement during planning processes, consultations, implementation, validation, and reviewing procedures relating to improving quality education

**Secondary outcomes**

1. Existing youth and student organisations and affiliations and youth-led solutions are provided opportunities to gain support through sustainable funding and resourcing
2. Youth and students are invited by member states in intergenerational dialogues to shape national education commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The virtual event will be structured as an interactive and intergenerational session, featuring UN, civil society, academia and government representatives. More particularly, youth representatives will answer questions prepared for the session and share experiences and lessons learned. The showcased examples of meaningful and successful youth actions will provide a set of good practices for possible replication and adaptation in other relevant contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The session will highlight the experiences of youth and student panellists and their creative action towards creating more sustainable and equitable education. An overview of the structure can be seen below:

01:30-01:35 Opening remarks and Introduction

SDG4Youth Network Moderator will open the session and give the floor to UNESCO and UN MGCY representatives
Panellists will be introduced briefly by the moderator.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 01:35-01:45 | Speech by representatives  
Speaker 1: Sobhi Tawil, Director of Future of Learning and Innovation, UNESCO  
Speaker 2: MGCY Representative |
| 01:45-02:35 | Youth Panellist Presentations  
Each panellist will share their journey of taking action achieving quality education in their local communities for 5 minutes each.  
The moderator will lead a discussion with the panellists around the guiding questions below. Panellists will share their insights and the recommendations from their consultations with other young people to achieve these targets. |
| 02:35-02:50 | Attendee Engagement  
Attendees will share their thoughts on the future of education through a series of questions facilitated using menti.com. |
| 02:50-03:00 | Closing Remarks (SDG4 Youth TES Youth Advisor)  
Key outcomes of this session will be expressed to attendees and next steps on strengthening youth partnerships in local communities will be shared. |

**SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How can we ensure meaningful youth engagement and youth advocacy in transforming and reimagining the future of education?
2. How can young people and stakeholders work together to build back SDG 4 issues that are off track?
3. What kind of education is needed to ensure youth empowerment and positive engagement in society?

**NAMES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)**

TBC

**OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION**

Leading up to the breakout session, the co-leaders will organize several consultations with UN and youth co-organizers, including the SDG4 Youth Network. The consultations will follow an interactive dialogue format relying on guiding questions and will prioritize the voices of young people. Audiences
will be given the opportunity to engage in the preparatory events through social media and ad hoc surveys to be published on the official communication channels of both co-leaders and co-organizers.

**SUGGESTED READING, IF ANY**

1. Sustainable Development Goal 4 and its targets
2. Incheon Declaration: Education 2030: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All
3. A Youth Development Lens on Education 2030 (SDG4) - Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development
4. Education for Sustainable Development Goals: learning objectives
5. Global Citizenship Education: Topics and objectives
6. UN Youth Strategy, Youth 2030: Working With and For Young People, Fourth Priority: Youth and Human Rights
7. UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training
9. Plan of action for the fourth phase (2020-2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education
10. SDG4Youth Network, Youth and Students at the Centre of SDG4
11. Transforming Education Summit