



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

## TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

### REMARKS

**H.E. Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava,  
President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council  
“Investing in adolescents and youth to eradicate poverty and promote  
prosperity to realize the demographic dividend and achieve the 2030  
Agenda”  
17 July 2017  
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Excellency,  
Mrs. Amina Mohamed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the new Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth,  
Youth representatives,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all of you to this High-Level Luncheon.

Investing in adolescents and youth to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity to realize the demographic dividend and achieve the 2030 Agenda, the theme today, is a critical issue of our time.

I would also like to mention that it is an issue that has been engaging my region of late. With 60 percent of Africa’s population under the age of 25, the urgency of investing in young people to harness the demographic dividend has been recognized by the African Union and was the theme for this year’s Summit. Other countries and regions also understand that their future economic growth and sustainable development lies in the hands of its young people.

At the 2017 ECOSOC Youth Forum, I stressed the need to invest in young people’s education and skills training to unleash their creativity and innovation.

Improving the quality of education and training, and equipping young people with the skills needed for the labour market today and in the future is a priority that is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.



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Around 40 per cent of young people in the labour market are still either unemployed, under employed or not paid a living wage. This is untenable as the youth are a critical source of innovation and energy for development. Ensuring sufficient employment opportunities and decent work remains a very pressing challenge.

Well prepared and equipped young people are typically the most able to adapt to the rapid technological change we are now experiencing. They more easily keep up with new trends, and are more likely to take risks and start new ventures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Rapid innovation in the economy, science and technology is not being matched by commensurate innovation in education systems required to prepare young people for an ever-changing job market. We need more public-private partnerships devoted to training young people in science, technology and innovation.

We must begin by getting all children into classrooms is critical. 61.4 million children of primary school age do not receive a proper education, and girls also remain 1.5 times more likely than boys to be excluded from primary school.

Education is a human right and closing the gender gap at all levels of education must be a priority to empower girls and young women so that they can improve their lives.

Today, young adults expect quality schooling, decent jobs, and an environment that is fit for themselves and their families.

Undertaking all these tasks requires a holistic approach. And the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development already provides a solid framework for young people to benefit from as well as participate to help implement the agenda.

I appreciate gatherings like this one and dedicated spaces such as the annual ECOSOC Youth Forum where we can engage young people, better understand their needs and potential, and generate much needed momentum for shaping a better future for all. The voices of youth should be heard and their potential should be fully utilized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us work together to make sure that we take all the necessary measures to empower young women and men everywhere.

I thank you.



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**  
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

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