



#YOUTH2030

6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum ECOSOC PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

The role of youth in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity in a changing world

30-31 January 2017

United Nations Headquarters, New York

The 6th United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum convened in New York from 30 to 31 January 2017 against the backdrop of a backlash against globalization, increasing inequality and a marked shift towards nationalism and isolation in many parts of the world.

We witnessed an outpouring of optimism and strong belief in collective action by young people and Member States for people, planet, peace and shared prosperity. The Forum demonstrated that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its universal, holistic and people-centered approach, is a powerful framework that can address the concerns and discontent with globalization. Young people are stepping up to engage with the Agenda, support its implementation, advocate for the SDGs, and hold their Governments accountable.

Over the past years, the level of engagement of the Forum has continued to grow, reflecting the important need for a regular global convening and multi-stakeholder dialogue on youth issues. This year, boasting the highest number of youth participants from across the world, the Forum was the largest ever since its inception six years ago. With 129 Member States participating, including 37 Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the highest authorities on youth, we witnessed how the Forum offered a critical platform for dialogue on how youth can be involved in the implementation as well as the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

We heard the voices of youth from all regions and diverse constituencies. We engaged with Ministers of youth, education, women and foreign affairs, parliamentarians, other high-level government officials, as well as representatives of youth-focused and youth-led organizations and networks, and UN System entities. We learned about new national efforts to empower youth, support their development and institutionalize their participation in decision-making. We also heard how Member States are mainstreaming youth issues and priorities into national SDG implementation strategies and engaging young people in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

With respect to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, we focused on the role of the youth in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity; food security and eradicating hunger; health; empowerment of women and girls; youth employment, productive capacity and the sustainable use of natural resources, including oceans and the marine environment; technology and innovation and financing youth development. During these thematic discussions, we heard



#YOUTH2030

about a wide range of innovative approaches and initiatives launched to harness the potential of young women and men around the world. Many of these inspiring initiatives were initiated and driven by young people themselves and should be encouraged. We also heard specific and frank assessments by the youth of the challenges faced by young people across all regions with regard to the implementation of the SDGs.

The following key messages and recommendations emerged from our discussions during the Forum:

- We must ensure youth inclusion and engagement at all levels and in all processes that affect them, including in the design of national plans. Young people’s participation should be institutionalized through national Youth Advisory Councils and other mechanisms. The United Nations must enable youth to play its due role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country level. We also heard a strong call for Member States to increase the number of youth delegates so that they have a stronger voice on all issues under discussion in the UN that affect them. In this regard, many emphasized the need for countries participating in the Voluntary National Reviews of the HLPF to include youth representatives in their delegations.
- We must prioritize the creation of decent jobs for youth in a changing labour market, including “green” jobs and opportunities in agriculture and industrial development. Special attention should be paid to youth in the rural economy and youth in fragile situations. Partnerships between governments, social partners, education providers, the private sector, civil society and youth organizations need to be strengthened to address the youth employment challenge.
- We must invest in young people’s education and skills-training to unleash their creativity and innovation. Promoting social entrepreneurship and business opportunities for young people must be a priority. Quality apprenticeships and internships are also a necessary part of work-based learning to prepare young people for work.
- We need to promote new and innovative technologies as a means to improve access and quality of education and vocational training for young people. New communication technologies should also be harnessed to better communicate the SDGs and support their implementation.
- We also need to halt climate change and environmental degradation to preserve sectors with the greatest potential to create job and opportunities for youth such as agricultural systems and other natural resources in oceans and the marine environment.
- We need to create opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for young people in the agricultural sector through increasing their access to land and other productive resources.



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- In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, we need to channel resources from all sources – public, private, philanthropic and Official Development Assistance - to promote direct investment in the priority issues that affect young people, including youth initiatives and enterprises, youth organizations, and in productive sectors and activities that benefit them most. This can be done through creating youth funds that address their real long-term demands and developments.
- Quality, timely and regular data on youth is essential for evidence-based youth programmes as well as for monitoring and reviewing progress, including the Means of Implementation.
- As youth issues cut across different sectors, we need strong coordination among Ministries and national institutions, including Ministries for Planning and Finance to ensure policy coherence and the effective promotion and implementation of national youth strategies as an instrument to meet young people’s needs and aspirations.
- We must ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls are a priority throughout the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in order to achieve them by 2030.
- We must involve young people in governance and in resolving conflicts and building sustainable peace as they inordinately affect their future opportunities and prospects. In this regard, there were calls for special support for internally displaced and refugee and migrant youth.

The unique regional dimension of the youth challenge and potential was discussed in special sessions devoted to the African, Arab, Latin America and Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, the European, North American and Others Groups. It emerged that poverty, unemployment and lack of access to quality education remained common challenges in all regions. However, the situation was more pronounced in Africa and in the Arab regions where more needs to be done through education and training, skill development and social entrepreneurship. Still more needs to be done to bring together governments, the private sector and civil society working with the youth for the achievement of the SDGs and for solutions to youth problems. Peace and security were also highlighted as key concerns for young people in these two regions.

We heard strong appreciation expressed by young people for the space provided to them to dialogue among themselves and with Member States. We must build on the achievement of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, to strengthen the voice and participation of young people in building the future we want.