



#YOUTH2030

7th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

“The role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities”

30-31 January 2018, United Nations Headquarters, New York

The 7th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum convened in New York from the 30th to the 31st of January 2018. The Forum continued to grow in size and stature, bringing together the largest number of Ministers and senior officials to date (38), and over 700 youth participants from around the world.

During these two days, youth representatives and Member States delegates have responded to these challenges by making commitments to build sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities. They focused their attention on access to water, sanitation (SDG 6), and energy (SDG 7); sustainable and inclusive cities (SDG 11), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12); sustainably managed forests (SDG 15); use of science, technology and innovations in facilitating youth engagement, development and resilience (SDG 17).

Through plenary discussions and breakout sessions, the Council listened to a wide diversity of voices and ideas from young people across all regions. We were inspired by young people’s proposals to climate change and social inequity—smart water, energy efficiency, compost and recycling, decentralized economy think tanks, biodiversity and forest conservation and preservation of indigenous knowledge. At the same time, policymakers shared with us their approach to engaging young people in decision-making and implementing of the 2030 Agenda and addressing their priorities in their national SDG implementation strategies.

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

- We need holistic approaches produced by communities and stakeholders at all levels, to work together towards the common goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal agenda and sustainable development should be achieved irrespective of one’s location and origins.
- We must include youth across all levels of policy-making and in all processes that affect them, including in the design of national plans. Young people should seize leadership and take responsibility for their future.
- At the same time, we heard a strong call to Member States to ensure that young people have the institutional and political space to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at country, regional and global levels. The voices of young people can be amplified at the global level if they are included as youth delegates at the UN and if they are part of national delegations for the review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the High-Level Political



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Forum. They should hold their Governments accountable for their commitments, including through vigorous shadow reporting.

- Ministries responsible for the youth portfolio have a huge responsibility to ensure young people are prioritized. They were urged to do this through collaboration with other line Ministries while fostering partnerships with youth and other civil society organizations.
- We heard their assessment that many of the people who lack access to water, sanitation and energy are young, and so are many of those who are affected by and vulnerable to natural disasters and biodiversity loss. We heard your concerns over the social, health and economic consequences and impacts on young people and the need to address resilience as an indispensable, cross-cutting component of any development plan.
- We were encouraged by the many youth-inspired and youth-led initiatives, directed for instance towards protecting the environment, ecosystems and biodiversity, towards increasing the eco-efficiency of our consumption and towards reducing pollution and minimizing waste. We must provide financial and capacity-building
- We must increase our efforts to make our societies resilient, both in urban and rural settings, and promote youth participation, representation and engagement in local governance. Cities should assimilate and collaborate with youth to achieve a peaceful, resilient and sustainable future for our planet. They need to be more youth and gender-responsive, promoting safety proximity and mixed use of housing.
- We were called on to invest in continuous scientific and technological innovation to improve our tools to tackle the challenges we face, and to pay attention to those who are the most vulnerable in our societies including the youth. Ensuring quality and affordable access to technology at an early age would be key for young people's empowerment. In particular, multilingual and inclusive access is needed to ensure marginalized communities are not left behind.
- We have heard the call to focus on protecting our environment, ecosystems and biodiversity, and on ensuring availability and sustainable management of drinking water, sanitation and energy.
- We acknowledge the need for modern energy that employs sustainable energy tools, renewable energy technologies, enabling and supportive policy frameworks. We need innovative business models and methods that utilize the expertise of local youth; prioritize rural communities; and ensure resilience.
- 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. The efforts of social entrepreneurs to bridge this funding gap, although insufficient, was lauded. Youth funds that can support youth-led actions and initiatives



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should be explored Funding for formal youth engagement in the UN processes was also considered crucial.

- We heard the urgency of tackling corruption and illicit financial flows, as well as the need for alignment of macroeconomic policies a into financial markets with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.
- We heard about some of the unique challenges to achieving the sustainable development goals in special sessions devoted to different regions. Specific mention was made of common challenges such as unemployment and underemployment, the need to reimagine education systems and improve access to technology and innovation.
- We welcome the commitments made by member states, youth organizations, and individuals to undertake actions designed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and look forward to seeing their fruition.

We heard the strong appreciation expressed by young people for the space provided by the Youth Forum. We also welcome the space for virtual participation that allowed young people from across the world who could not travel to New York. We recognize that this is an important Forum for dialogue among young people, Member States and the ECOSOC system, and we recognize the need to maintain and nurture it. We move forward knowing that we must build on the achievement of the ECOSOC Youth Forum to strengthen the voice and meaningful participation of young people in building sustainable and resilient societies and contributing to our shared future.