



**United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)  
2014 Forum on Youth**

***“#Youth2015: Realizing the future they want”***  
**2-3 June 2014**

**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik, President of ECOSOC**

Excellencies,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished guests,  
Young people,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and a very warm welcome to the 2014 ECOSOC Forum on Youth.

On behalf of the Economic and Social Council, I'd like to extend an especially warm welcome to the many young faces I see in the audience, and also to those joining us via social media and on the webcast.

This year, our focus will be to address “#Youth2015: Realizing the future they want”.

As we approach the final stages of the Millennium Development Goals, let us seize the opportunity, over the following two days, to take stock of the achievements, hard work and lessons learned over the past 14 years, and to explore and advocate for young people's development priorities and concerns for the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Around the world today, there are 1.8 billion adolescents and youth; totaling one quarter of the world's population.





Youth are the catalysts for change in society. For centuries, the imagination and energy of young people has driven societies to innovate, grow and achieve a better quality of life than those that went before them.

This could not be truer for the youth of today.

The actions of young people in recent years have instigated political uprisings and altered traditional power structures. They have demonstrated for human rights, initiated unprecedented online campaigns for various causes, and revolutionized technology and the way we communicate with each other. Not to mention the creativity, innovation and significant research accomplishments that youth have brought to diverse fields from medicine through to microfinance.

However, several barriers still remain to youth achieving their full potential.

Youth unemployment tops the list. In 2013, it was estimated that 73 million young people were unemployed. Moreover, about 225 million youth, or 20% of all youth in developing countries were not engaged in education, employment or training. The economic and social costs for young people *and* society are devastating.

Access to quality education and the opportunity to pursue their desired level of education is another. In various regions, girls and young women face multiple counts of discrimination and are often among the most marginalized in society. Access to basic human rights including food, good health and a safe environment that is free from violence are daily struggles for some youth.

But I am optimistic about our ability to enact change. The process of change did not start today at this Forum but from when you as a young person first began to take an interest in the challenges that plague the world today. It started when you decided to act on your vision for the future and be change that you wish to see in the world.

Young people across the world have leveraged the use of new technologies to make their voices heard. I am impressed by the level of participation of young people from all over the world in the MyWorld campaign and the recent crowdsourcing platform launched earlier this year.





In that connection, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize your inputs and views as reflected in the *Global call on youth: “Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda”*. I look forward to its finalization and presentation to Member States tomorrow afternoon.

Today, realizing the future that you want can be furthered through two processes.

First, I ask that you engage directly with the sessions over the following two days and clearly define your understanding of the key issues that affect youth today. And secondly, collaborate with the stakeholders here today to assess how these barriers for youth can be overcome and evaluate how these issues could be addressed in relation to future development goals.

It is my desire to see youth fully enabled to participate in civil society and political processes, to engage in meaningful employment, to achieve their desired level of education, and to realize their full potential as empowered, interested and active members of society.

To this end, the Economic and Social Council wishes to incorporate the ideas, needs and concerns of young people in our discussions. The annual Youth Forum is aimed at achieving this.

For over 60 years, the Economic and Social Council has been and continues to be a place where governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector can come together to collectively solve the world’s development challenges. Today, through this Forum, we welcome the young delegates, young entrepreneurs, young students and representatives of youth NGOs who are here to tell their stories, voice their concerns, pose questions and share their unique perspectives.

Dear Friends,

Youth are not only the future of tomorrow – youth are leaders, entrepreneurs, students, workers, care-givers and problem solvers of *today*. Enabling one quarter of the world’s population to participate in the international decision-making process for the future is essential.

The Economic and Social Council is committed to make further efforts to work with you as important partners. Together, we can unite for youth beyond 2015.





Again, welcome to the 2014 ECOSOC Forum on Youth.

Distinguished President of the General Assembly, the floor is yours.

