

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
2014 YOUTH FORUM
“#Youth2015: Realizing the Future They Want”
2-3 JUNE 2014
New York**

SUMMARY

In July 2014, Member States, policy-makers, civil society organizations, representatives of academia and the private sector will meet in New York during the high-level segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to address the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) on “Addressing on-going and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future.”

To bring the voice of youth into the discussions, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, organized the ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York, 2-3 June, to provide a platform for young people to engage in dialogue with Member States on how they can be included in shaping the sustainable development goals and the Post-2015 development agenda. Over 350 youth representatives actively participated throughout the discussions, contributing their ideas and identifying the key priority areas that should be reflected in the future development agenda.



UN ECOSOC President

@UNECOSOC Jun 2

#Youth are the catalysts for change in society.

#Youth2015 <http://webtv.un.org>

The Forum, which was addressed by the President of ECOSOC and the United Nations Secretary General, featured a number of breakout sessions around five key thematic areas identified in the ‘*Global Youth Call: Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*’, namely, health, governance and participation, education, employment and entrepreneurship and peace and personal security. In addition, young people actively contributed to the discussions online via social media and crowdsourcing outlets, such as Twitter using the hashtag “#Youth2015”, which further captured the diverse voices of youth from around the world.

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In his opening remarks, the President of ECOSOC underscored the fact that enabling one quarter of the world’s population to participate in the international decision-making process for the future is essential. The Secretary General also urged young people to keep doing their part while showing your leadership as global citizens.

The following presents the key messages, ideas and recommendations that emerged from the discussions as well as the contributions of young participants from social media platforms.¹

Main Messages and Key Recommendations from Youth Participants

The needs of young people must be prioritized and adequately reflected within the Post-2015 development agenda in order to secure the future they want and we all need. It is fundamental that young people are recognized as a key stakeholder in the achievement of the present and future development goals. To this end, the UN system, private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders must partner with youth to create an enabling environment for young people to reach their full potential and deliver on the global commitments that will be set forth within the sustainable development goals and the Post-2015 agenda.

With 1.8 billion strong, the world is home to the largest generation of young people aged 10 to 24 in its history. Close to 90 percent of the world's youth live in developing countries, where they tend to make up the largest proportion of the population. Youth around the world face diverse challenges, including exclusion from decision-making processes in matters that pertain to them, lack of jobs, the residual effects of conflict and climate change, with African youth being at a particular disadvantage.

Role of Youth

- ❖ Youth should be given the space to lead, which can be supported through the promotion of intergenerational dialogue.
- ❖ The needs and priorities of youth should be at the centre of the Post-2015 development agenda and they should be an important stakeholder in monitoring and accountability to ensure its implementation.

Youth and the SDGs

- ❖ Advancing opportunities for young people should be prioritized within the framework of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.
- ❖ Governments should ensure all young people have access to inclusive, adequate and high-quality formal, non-formal and vocational education and training, which enables them to lead a healthy and productive life, equips them with skills that are relevant to market needs and fosters global citizenship.
- ❖ Increase access to decent work and livelihood opportunities and promote access to essential financial and non-financial resources to increase entrepreneurship opportunities and develop public-private partnerships to stimulate job creation and youth employment.
- ❖ Governments should provide universal access to affordable, acceptable and quality health services, including access to sexual and reproductive health services and education for youth.

¹ Disclaimer: The social media highlights from Twitter do not reflect the views of the United Nations or the Economic and Social Council.

- ❖ Comprehensive national policies must be in place to eliminate violence, discrimination, exploitation and exclusion of young people.
- ❖ Young people should play a central role in preventing and resolving conflict, as this is an essential condition for the development of peaceful, inclusive and safe societies,;
- ❖ The protection and fulfilment of human rights and promotion of gender equality must be central in all efforts targeting youth.
- ❖ The targets areas contained in the Global Youth Call in the priority themes for youth, namely: education; employment and entrepreneurship; health; peace and personal security; and, governance and participation, should be included under the relevant sustainable development goals.
- ❖ All levels of government must prioritize the key thematic areas of the Global Youth Call by integrating youth priorities within the national and local policy agendas and programmes of action.

Youth Engagement

- ❖ Youth must be actively engaged as a key stakeholder in formal and informal decision-making and policy-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.
- ❖ The ECOSOC Youth Forum should continue as a place where youth's collective ideas, solutions and innovations can be captured and disseminated. They should be allowed the space to contribute to policy formulation at the UN.

Uniting for Youth Beyond 2015

Accounting for 1.8 billion of the world's population, young people can serve as a catalyst for transformative change to implement the sustainable development agenda in the post-2015 era. The actions of young people in influencing political change, revolutionizing technology and their efforts in protecting human rights highlight the inherent potential of youth as a driving force for change. However, a number of barriers remain for youth to achieve their full potential and live healthy and productive lifestyles, which includes but are not limited to, unemployment, lack of access to quality education and training, discrimination particularly towards girls and young women, lack of access to quality health services. To this end, it is critical for governments to prioritize the needs of youth and create an enabling environment for young people to thrive in order to shape, implement, and achieve the world's future sustainable development goals. The international community should partner with youth in the decision-making processes and

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implementation of the post-2015 development agenda to ensure that the needs of young people are appropriately reflected.

Young people around the world have actively engaged in the preparatory processes shaping the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals. They have participated actively in the “World We Want 2015” Campaign, the MyWorld Survey, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) regional consultations and have presented their views to the Open Working Group on sustainable development goals to ensure that young peoples’ needs are prioritized within the framework. To further amplify the voices of young people in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 processes, a number of global and regional youth fora have actively engaged youth from around the world alongside Member States, civil society and other key stakeholders to strengthen the participation of young people in the current and future development initiatives, such as:

- The **Sri Lanka World Conference on Youth (May 2014)**, spearheaded by an International Youth Task Force alongside the government of Sri Lanka, captured the various priorities and needs of young people in the outcome document, [Colombo Declaration on Youth](#). The Declaration consists of 88 recommendations and 9 core commitments.
- The **ITU BYND 2015 Global Youth Summit** held in Costa Rica (September 2013) engaged a world-wide community of youth on how technology can contribute to a better world and shape the Post-2015 development agenda particularly in the areas of governance, cybersecurity, environmental stability, health and employment. The combined contributions of the young participants at the summit and the ideas that emerged from the virtual engagement of young people through social media channels and crowd-sourcing platforms successfully produced the first publically sourced document to be endorsed by the General Assembly, the [BYND 2015 Global Youth Declaration](#).
- The **Youth Consultations of the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF)** throughout 2014 resulted in a number of shared expectations of French-speaking youth set out within the framework for sustainable development. Making youth stakeholders and main actors in decision making processes and creating a stand-alone goal on youth were identified as key areas which generated a consensus among French-speaking youth to priorities within the sustainable development framework.
- The **Regional Youth Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean** held in Quito, Ecuador gathered youth throughout the region, as well as representatives from governments and civil society, including the Ibero-American Youth Organization, to facilitate a space for dialogue between youth and various key stakeholders to generate a series of recommendations for the post-2015 development agenda. The recommendations included the establishment of necessary mechanisms to ensure the right to health, guarantee quality education, and ensure inclusive participation of youth in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and validation of multi-sectoral public policies.

A Youth Perspective: Advancing Progress in Africa

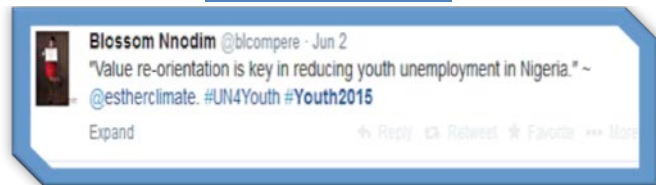
Africa is a continent of young people with 65 per cent of the population below the age of 35, and nearly 50 per cent under the age of 19. The African youth bulge could be considered as a potential driver or impediment to growth, particularly in view of the increasing barriers related to access to quality education and health services, employment opportunities, and in the area of peace and security. In order for Africa's youth to thrive, African governments must create an enabling environment that provides the proper foundations and equal opportunities for young people to reach their full potential as drivers for inclusive sustainable development throughout the region. An environment conducive to empowering young people as leaders in advancing the sustainable future of Africa requires strategic investment in quality education and health services; supporting youth participation in formal and informal decision-making and policy-making processes; and promoting the advancement of human rights, gender mainstreaming, good governance, and peace and security.

African youth have actively engaged in the post-2015 development processes in order to ensure that their aspirations and values are recognized and reflected in the post-2015 development framework. Emerging from these discussions, African youth have indicated a number of key priority areas to be addressed such as education, entrepreneurship, and good governance.

Investment in education is essential for the advancement of Africa's youth in order to mitigate existing inequalities in access to quality education and to improve the condition and safety of schools. To this end, governments should implement key policies that promote equal access to high quality education, improving teacher training, and reviewing national curricula in order to align the technical and vocational training needs of the labour market and to develop relevant life skills in young people.

In addition, fostering entrepreneurship opportunities for Africa's youth is a strategic solution in reducing high rates of unemployment and underemployment throughout the region. Entrepreneurship allows young people to develop their ideas in a practical way and implement innovative solutions to both old and new market gaps, while creating businesses and promoting job growth. Providing access to mentorship programs, engaging in partnerships with private sector, and training programs could assist young entrepreneurs to gain access to funding and resources necessary to support their activities.

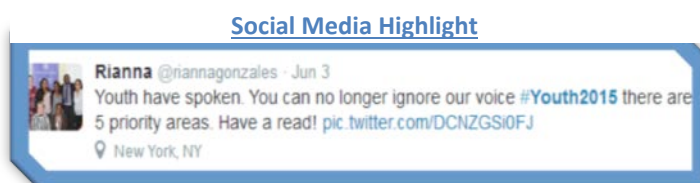
Social Media Highlight



Furthermore, ensuring good governance at the local and national level is essential for sustaining progress in Africa. Governments must ensure that youth are included in decision-making processes and are involved in monitoring mechanisms that ensure accountability and transparency at the national and local levels of government. In addition governments should prioritize non-discrimination, gender equality and social inclusive policies to ensure rights of all young people are fully recognized in Africa. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a Pan-African Observatory for the Culture of Peace.

The Global Youth Call

The Global Youth Call represents an unprecedented emerging consensus among youth on concrete proposals that are important for youth in the post-2015 development agenda. Building on the thematic priorities of over 1.3 million young people who voted in the MyWorld2015 survey, which were further elaborated by youth from around the world in the online Crowdsourcing Platform on Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda², along with the results of numerous of recent global, regional and national youth consultations and meetings that have taken place in the context of the post-2015 development agenda process, as well as other international and regional fora, a team of moderators from international youth organizations and UN entities, led by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, synthesized and consolidated these outcomes in the Global Call on Youth: Prioritizing Youth in the post-2015 development agenda. The Global Youth Call, which has been endorsed by over 1000 youth organizations from over 140 countries, major international youth organizations, UN agencies, Regional Intergovernmental bodies, is premised on the notion that in order to achieve sustainable development investments in youth must be prioritized in the post-2015 development agenda. Given the particular development needs that need to be met to ensure a successful transition from childhood to adulthood for this and future generations of young people and as young people make up a significant proportion of the population, particularly in developing countries, youth needs cannot be overlooked.



The Call identifies five thematic priority areas: education; employment and entrepreneurship; health; peace and personal security; and, governance and participation. The following presents the contributions made by the young participants to the five thematic priority areas and key recommendations that emerged from the relevant discussions.

Education

Increasing access to quality education for young people can lift millions of youth around the world from poverty. Universal access to formal, non-formal and vocational education and training can provide relevant knowledge and skills to enable young people to lead a healthy and productive life, as well as equip them with practical job skills that are aligned with the demands of the labour market and that foster global citizenship. Increasing investments in providing inclusive access to knowledge, resources and safe learning spaces, particularly for young women, is critical to provide young people with the skill-set to enable their participation in the job market. To this end, quality education and training must be prioritized within the post-2015 development framework in order for young people to be well equipped for the future.

² The crowdsourcing platform, launched by the Office of the SG's Envoy on Youth and run in partnership with ITU, UNFPA, UNMC, and the partners of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, offered a concrete vehicle for the engagement with the Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Employment and Entrepreneurship

In 2013, nearly 200 million people were unemployed, of which some 74 million were between the ages of 15 and 24. The increasing barriers for young people to attain decent work is often due to the lack of necessary experience, social capital, relevant education, training and/or skills to be competitive in the job market. In addition, young entrepreneurs lack access to finance, skills training and support when setting up and managing their own businesses. To this end, improving employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth requires the leadership of governments alongside private sector actors to stimulate job growth.

Governments can play a strategic role in securing opportunities for youth through engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, academia and civil society to facilitate a dialogue on ways in which to ensure a better match between the skills of young people and the changing needs of the labour

market. The engagement and commitment of the private sector is increasingly essential as evidence suggests that 9 out of 10 jobs will be created in the private sector. However, the private sector must deliver on

their responsibilities to eliminate exploitive work and ensure equal pay for work of equal value for young people. The private sector can also continue to expand and adopt non-discriminative recruitment policies, as well as quotas and targets for the employment of youth and marginalized youths.

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Health

A number of barriers continue to impede adolescents and youth from attaining a high standard of physical, social and mental health. Universal access to adequate health services, in particular, inclusive access for adolescences affected by HIV/AIDs, marginalized groups and existing discriminatory practices against women remains a fundamental challenge for young people to lead healthy lives. Governments must recognize the social and political determinants of health and address all social, economic, and political inequality and exclusion as a means to address the various health concerns of youth and improve the overall well-being of young people. Furthermore, increasing investments in preventative measures for the top three causes of death among adolescents and youth, including road accidents, HIV and suicide, should be prioritized by governments.

Peace and Security

Young people are increasingly disproportionately affected by violence, conflict, and physical, psychological and sexual abuse and exploitation. All forms of violence stifle creativity and innovation, and inhibit young people from achieving their full potential. For young people to thrive, they need a safe and stable environment that eliminates all forms of violence and increases personal security.

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In order to ensure social stability, strengthen peaceful and inclusive societies, and to safeguard youth from violence requires the active participation and engagement of young people in humanitarian and development efforts. Young people can play a strategic role in promoting peaceful and stable societies through educating younger generations on methods to cope with peace and personal security, creating grassroots organizations with the aim of preventing conflict, and encourage the exchange of information on issues related to personal security. However, in order to achieve sustainable peace and support young people's initiatives, governments must invest in education that focuses on gender equality, violence prevention, conflict resolution techniques and mental health and promote young people's participation as an essential condition for safe and secure societies.

Governance and Participation

Governance has been identified as a key priority area for young people, particularly in relation to strengthening the inclusive participation of youth in decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels. Young people are increasingly underrepresented in formal governance institutions and processes. Good governance requires the meaningful participation of young people in the planning, implementing, and monitoring of policies and programmes to fully be recognized as partners in development. Youth can play an important role in electing and/or supporting their government and can drive the successful implementation of development initiatives. Furthermore, transparency and accountability mechanisms should be implemented so that information can be made publically available for youth to monitor the responsiveness of their governments.

Key Recommendations

- Ensure universal access to quality primary and post-primary education and expand equitable access to tertiary education
- Ensure all young people achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes with quality formal, non-formal and vocational education and training that equips them with the relevant knowledge and skills to lead safe, healthy and productive lives, to meet the demands of the job market and to foster global citizenship.
- Reduce the number of youth not in employment, education or training and increase access to decent work and livelihoods amongst young people by providing access to learning opportunities, putting in place school-to-work transition policies, strengthening public private partnerships for better skills-matching, enhance access to financial and non-financial services to increase opportunities for youth-led entrepreneurship, and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- Ensure young people's meaningful and inclusive participation in decision making processes, governance and peacebuilding, and develop, implement and adequately fund cross-sectorial youth policies and review mechanisms, in the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth
- Improve the physical, social and mental health of adolescents and youth, promote healthy behaviours for reducing the risk of Non-Communicable Diseases and substance abuse, and increase access to affordable, acceptable and quality-assured adolescent- and youth-friendly health services and information
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. including HIV, modern methods of contraceptives, and comprehensive education on human sexuality, with a particular focus on adolescent girls;
- Promote human rights and gender equality and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against adolescents and youth, including adolescent girls and young women, including child, early and forced marriage and harmful practices.
- Strengthen collection and analysis of data on adolescents and youth, disaggregated by age, sex and marital status, to promote monitoring, evaluation, accountability and transparency and support advocacy and policy making.