



CONCEPT NOTE SESSION 4

Gender Equality and Youth: 20 Years since the Beijing Platform for Action and onwards to a Post-2015 Development Framework

ECOSOC Youth Forum 2015

**3 February 2015
Conference Room 4
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

1. Background and Context

The ECOSOC will convene a Youth Forum on 2-3 February 2015 focusing on how to maximize the engagement of youth in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A child born in the same year as the birth of the Millennium Development Goals (2000), will become a youth and celebrate her 15th birthday just as the MDGs expire. Throughout the Forum, discussions will be framed to look at what gains have been made for a child born in this period, and what her prospects as a youth will look like beyond 2015. In doing so, the Forum will discuss ways in which young people can and are helping to manage the shift from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ways to ensure that the needs and priorities of all youth – including those that are most marginalized - are at the centre of the future development agenda and its implementation.

Today, girls and young women throughout the world continue to face gender-specific, discrimination and disadvantage. Globally, 35 per cent of all women and girls experience violence. More than 700 million women alive today were married as children. More than 73 million young people are unemployed today, but ILO studies show that unemployment among young women is even worse than among young men. Young women make up more than 60 per cent of young people living with HIV globally.



ECOSOC Youth Forum



The ECOSOC Youth Forum precedes the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which will undertake a 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The WPAY, adopted in 1995, noted, “One of the most important tasks of youth policy is to improve the situation of girls and young women.” Young women and girls is one of the fifteen priority areas of action under the WPAY, but must also be a cross-cutting issue in the implementation of all other priority areas.

Almost 20 years since its adoption in 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the most comprehensive global normative framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. “The girl child” is one of its twelve critical areas of concern, and many of the other areas are of critical importance to young women, including those on education, health, the economy and participation in decision-making. Young women and girls thus have a critical stake in the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action as such progress is instrumental to their equality, empowerment and enjoyment of all their human rights, everywhere. Translating the WPAY and the Beijing Platform for Action into practical reality will ensure inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive youth development towards a sustainable future.

In keeping with the ECOSOC Youth Forum’s overall theme of “Youth managing the transition from MDGs to SDGs” and to mark the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Women, with the support of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), is organizing a session on Gender Equality and Youth.

2. Objectives

This session will serve as a call to action by youth to Governments and other stakeholders to keep the promises made 20 years ago, and to build on the lessons learned from the MDGs so that gender equality and women’s empowerment becomes a lived reality in the post-2015 development era.

The session will rally young people to demand action and the changes that are needed to realize gender equality, through inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive youth development in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It will highlight the critical needs and priorities for young women and girls, including in areas such as enabling policy environments that are conducive to job creation, wage equality and decent work, equal access to education and health for young women and girls; financing for inclusive and gender-sensitive youth development; the eradication all forms of violence against young women and girls; and participation of young women in in political and





decision-making processes; institutional mechanisms that ensure accountability to young women and girls; and partnerships that will lead to change.

The session will demonstrate the activism and engagement of youth ready to carry forward the ‘spirit of Beijing’, of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

3. Flow of the Session and Issues at stake

The 1.5 hour session will be conducted in a talk show format, with a moderator and four to five panelists. Each panelist will address the following issues and then take comments and questions from the floor.

- Introduction: Young women and girls: demanding action, demanding change 20 years after Beijing, 15 years since the MDGs, and preparing for the new development framework beyond 2015.
- 20 years since Beijing: enabling policy environments for equality and empowerment
- 20 years since Beijing: partnerships for inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive youth development
- 20 years since Beijing: accountability to young women and girls – resources and mechanisms
- Picture it: Young women and girls at the heart of the new development framework and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

4. Questions for the audience

- Twenty years since the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, what progress has been made and what challenges remain for young women and girls?
- What will make youth development inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive?
- What policy and mechanisms are required for ensuring gender-sensitive youth development?
- How can young people ensure the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive youth development?
- How can young people hold governments and other stakeholders accountable for gender equality?
- How do we ensure that young women and girls are at the centre of the new development framework and the Sustainable Development Goals?





5. Suggested reading materials

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action full text: <http://ow.ly/Fo1LK>
- The Beijing Platform for Action: inspiration then and now
<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>
- Beijing+20: Picture it! A global campaign for gender equality:
<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en>
- First Global Forum on Youth Policies connects the dots between gender equality and youth - <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/10/baku-global-forum-on-youth-policies>
- The World Programme of Action for Youth -
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>
- The Baku Commitments on Youth Policy -
<http://youthpolicyforum.org/documents/commitment.pdf>

