



Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

"Accelerating the COVID-19 recovery and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda with and for youth"

CONCEPT NOTE

25-27 April 2023

Background

The 2023 Annual Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum, will take place over three days on 25-27 April 2023, guided by the theme of the 2023 HLPF on *"Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels"*. Youth will be given the opportunity to present their assessment, vision and recommendations for member states' consideration ahead of the SDG Summit in September 2023.

The Youth Forum takes place amidst a world challenged by geopolitical tensions, a relentless climate crisis, rising poverty and inequalities as well as a slow and uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Against this backdrop, the Forum is an opportunity for young people to voice their views, concerns and galvanize actions on how to transform the world into a fairer, greener and more sustainable place guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ECOSOC Youth Forum has evolved into a key platform where young people, high-level Government representatives and other stakeholders contribute to policy discussions through their ideas, solutions, and innovations to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. It will connect with key UN processes and events in 2023 especially the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC in July 2023, and the SDG Summit, in September 2023 at the level of Heads of State and Government. The SDG Summit will aim to identify the ambitious and transformative actions needed to regain the ground lost in achieving the SDGs due to COVID-19 and the current crises as well as strengthen commitment, energy and enthusiasm for a more inclusive and effective multilateralism and solidarity.

The Forum will also complement other intergovernmental meetings, such as the upcoming UN Water Conference (March 2023) the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework (May 2023), and the LDC5 Conference (2023).

The Forum will be convened by the President of ECOSOC with the support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY), the United Nations Inter Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO), with technical inputs from youth-led and youth-focused organizations relevant to the theme of the forum.

Objectives

The 2023 ECOSOC Youth Forum will:

- **Mobilize** youth to accelerate recovery and rebuilding efforts from COVID-19 and gather around actions, initiatives and leadership efforts that should be recognized, celebrated and scaled up towards achieving the SDGs during the Decade of Action.
- **Provide** a platform for young people to meaningfully engage in a dialogue with UN Member States and UN entities on transformative pathways for realizing sustainable development.
- **Share** knowledge, skills, and lessons learned in achieving the rights and well-being of youth by promoting the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensuring the meaningful participation and engagement of young people in policymaking and implementation.
- **Present** ideas and solutions -- and showcase innovative initiatives and individual and collective action by youth and others -- to advance the SDGs based on national, regional and global experiences.
- **Bring** together young people to discuss inputs to the preparations for the 2023 SDG Summit as mid-term review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Discuss and report** on progress for the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy, *Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People*, and other issues related to young people including sharing information on plans for measuring and monitoring its impact at the country, regional and global levels and considering the role that young people and youth organizations can play in the implementation of the strategy.

Substantive Scope

Young people were uniquely vulnerable to the long-term socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic with major disruptions to education, training and employment. Despite being disproportionately impacted, young people have shown resilience and resourcefulness, and have demonstrated that they are key actors in shaping a fairer,

greener and more resilient future. With their strength, intelligence, determination and courage, they are acting not only as change makers combatting COVID-19, but also game changers implementing the SDGs.

Discussions will also focus on concrete actions and recommendations for enhanced commitment of the international community to young people's aspirations in the implementation of the SDGs under review at the HLPF in July 2023, among them:

- **SDG 6, “Ensure universal and equitable access to clean water and hygiene for all”** is at the core of young people's efforts to build sustainable and resilient communities. With around half of rural populations in LDCs lacking access to basic drinking water service¹, the burden of fetching water over long distances mostly falls on young women and girls². As water is linked to sanitation and hygiene, LDCs, with their younger populations³, see their youth at risk of health consequences that often translate into economic impacts⁴. Young people have demonstrated innovative approaches to advance efforts on SGD 6; these need to be leveraged and supported with additional investments and technical support⁵.

- **SDG 7, “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”** underscores the fact that sustainable energy is necessary for access to several services closely linked to youth development and well-being⁶. This includes education services as there is a link between low levels of electricity access and poor educational performance and lower attendance⁷. Sustainable energy is also linked to health benefits as indoor pollution caused by unsustainable energy sources can affect young people's brains and lungs with life-long consequences⁸, including on their capacity to grasp educational and economic opportunities. While SDG 7 does not include age-disaggregated indicators⁹, young people are fully aware of the importance of sustainable energy in ensuring the survival of the planet and have been taking drastic actions to support SDG 7.

Among other things, further engagement of young people in energy-focused processes at the national, regional and international levels is key to achieving SDG 7.

- **SDG 9, “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”**, underpins countless aspects of economic and social development. In particular, science and technological advancements as well as responsible industrial and business models, coupled with young people's capacity for innovation and inclusion, represent a powerful tool to advance SDG 9 as well as the entire 2030 Agenda¹⁰. Young people are increasingly demonstrating their capacity to use

¹ [Water and Sanitation - United Nations Sustainable Development](#)

² [Water and Gender | UN-Water \(unwater.org\)](#)

³ [Young People | 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries \(LDC5\)](#)

⁴ [Water | United Nations](#)

⁵ [Sustainable Development Goal 6: Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2018](#)

⁶ [Summary of the High-level Dialogue on Energy](#)

⁷ [POLICY BRIEF 4 - ENERGY AND SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

⁸ [Young and old, air pollution affects the most vulnerable \(unep.org\)](#)

⁹ [Leave No One Behind: Data Disaggregation for SDGs – Open Data Watch](#)

¹⁰ [Introduction to UNIDO- Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development](#)

technologies to generate greater public good, including in the digital world (e.g. digital commons, which is the open distribution and shared ownership of information, resources and technologies). In addition, young peoples' calls to ensure that investment in infrastructure are people-centered should be heard and supported.

- **SDG 11, “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”** is particularly important to young people as the vast majority of them live in urbanized areas. While cities are drivers of economic growth, they also account for more than 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions¹¹. Too often, urban development plans and policies are not inclusive of the reality of young people and can therefore exclude them from various opportunities or prevent them from accessing the services they need to reach their full potential. For example, shortage of affordable housing, limited access to health and social services, insufficient safe spaces, high levels of pollution, etc. deeply stifle youth development and can lead to isolation and poverty. Young people have been calling for inclusive urban policies and the access to a space welcoming them to contribute to building sustainable cities.

- **SDG 17, “Revitalize the global partnerships for sustainable development”** stresses that the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the next 7 years will require strong partnerships between young people and all stakeholders to ensure that young peoples' needs are addressed, and that enabling environments are created so these partnerships can thrive, and young people can meaningfully contribute and participate at all levels of decision-making. In that context, it will require understanding of the specific challenges that young people face, as well as the particular opportunities they offer, such as through their energy, creativity, innovation and connectedness.

Regional Dimension

The ECOSOC Youth Forum will also be a platform for discussions on the situation regarding post-COVID-19 recovery and rebuilding in the various regions as well as prepared inputs for the SDG Summit. Regional breakout sessions will be organized by the regional commissions, together with regional youth organizations and platforms.

Various preparatory events will also be organized during the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development to ensure broad participation of regional youth-led and youth-focused organizations and government representatives in intergovernmental discussions leading up to the Youth Forum. This will help to gather as wide a as possible.

Format

The ECOSOC Youth Forum will be a three-day event with the last day dedicated to the preparation of the 2023 SDG Summit. The event will be held in a hybrid format allowing for opportunities for in-person and virtual participation.

¹¹ [Urban Climate Action Is Crucial to Bend the Emissions Curve | UNFCCC](#)

It will feature opening and closing plenary sessions with representatives from youth organizations, high-level and keynote speakers.

Talented youth speakers will also deliver short presentations in between sessions sharing personal stories and solutions on people, planet, peace, prosperity and partnerships.

Ministerial sessions will offer a space to feature national reviews of progress on youth development and youth engagement in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Thematic and regional breakout sessions, as well as plenary sessions will address more in depth a diversity of topics where moderators will be identified to make the sessions dynamic, interactive and engaging to as many youth representatives as possible.

In person and virtual networking receptions will offer the opportunity to meet, greet, and reach different youth and government representatives. Virtual participation will be possible through different online platforms. The meeting will also be available through webcast and participants will also be able to ask questions via social media through Facebook and Twitter platforms (#Youth2030).

Participation

Participants of the Youth Forum will include:

- High-level Government representatives, including Ministers of Youth and other Ministries responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Youth Strategy at national level;
- High-level representatives of national youth institutions and representatives of National Youth Councils;
- Official country youth delegates;
- Representatives of regional and multilateral organizations;
- Youth-led and youth-focused entities, organizations, and groups from all regions, in particular those representing marginalized and vulnerable young people; and
- Youth organizations and representatives working at the grassroots, national, regional and international levels.

Side Events

Side events will be held in-person and virtually during the duration of the Youth Forum. They will be organized only during the times that the Youth Forum is not in session. The main objectives of the side events are to enrich the discussions at the forum, offer dedicated opportunities for exchanges of views and expand networking spaces. Guidelines for organizing side events will be posted on the ECOSOC Youth Forum's website in advance of the Forum.

Outcome

The outcome of the Forum will be an informal summary of the proceedings by the President of ECOSOC, a document capturing key messages and findings of the different sessions and a Presidential Statement as inputs to the High-level Political Forum, the High-level Segment of the Council in July 2023 and the SDG Summit under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2023.

In addition, major youth networks will bring together youth entities/organizations to prepare the “*Voices of Youth*” at the ECOSOC Youth Forum. This document would be a complement to the formal Major Group on Children and Youth Sectoral Position Paper, to be prepared for the HLPF in July and also available for the SDG Summit in September. It would be a direct call to action from young people on the current challenges they are facing and their expectations vis-à-vis the international community.

It is expected to contain high priority action points which young people may want to be reflected in the SDG Summit Political Declaration.

