



Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

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

REGIONAL SESSION ON ARAB STATES REGION

26 April 2023, 9:00 am to 10.30 am (NY Time)

Hybrid Event

IDENTIFICATION	
SDG/theme or Region	Arab States Region
Session title	Learning to Earning, Young People’s Transition Challenges and Opportunities
Session co-lead UN	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Session co-lead Youth	Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) Youth Development Delegates (UNDP), Mahmoud Abdelqader and Fatima Hayet Benmessaoud
Session co-organizers (both UN and Youth)	International Trade Centre (ITC) Youth Committee Members: Ahlam Said, Mariam Mohammad, Sagal Osman Abdi, Ibtehal Elsayed
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>The youth unemployment rate in the Arab region is the highest in the world. In early 2019, before the COVID-19 crisis began, youth unemployment stood at 29.4 percent in North Africa and 24.7 percent in the Middle East and Arab States region. Unemployment among young women was even worse, at 40.3 percent in North Africa and 36.5 percent in the Middle East and Arab States region, despite their relatively</p>	

high level of academic qualification (ILOSTAT 2019). Covid-19 has exacerbated pre-existing bottlenecks affecting youth employment across the region.

1. In light of these challenges, it is critical to re-examine how to integrate the new evidence on the changing labour market with future opportunities that lie ahead. To better navigate the future of work, a first component to build on would be **upskilling and re-skilling of youth**. This is particularly relevant considering the post-covid work paradigm shift, and the accustomed/traditional skills evolution which focuses more on digital ones. Added to that, there needs to be an increased focus on different skills that young people can develop and acquire, whether in addition to their studies or in other extracurricular experiences which are currently not reflected in the grading/ degree systems.
2. A second component to address within the learning to earning agenda would be to **explore alternative work pathways for youth**, such as half-time employment, entrepreneurship, and freelancing. This variation in employment alternatives enables youth in the Arab region to pursue their combined interests and are more likely to include young women, youth with disabilities, and those living in rural areas.
3. According to a study conducted by Deloitte, 82% of hiring managers are more likely to choose a candidate with volunteering experience. **Volunteering** can be a valuable and effective means for young new graduates to build their resumes and gain experience in new areas. It can also help them develop new skills and demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and community involvement. However, there are some challenges to volunteering in the Arab region.
4. **Visibility over social media** is another powerful tool for young new graduates who are seeking to expand their outreach and personal image/profile. According to the UN ESCWA report ([ESCWA, The Arab region may be missing the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Arab skills are still stuck in the past](#)), social media use in the Arab region is growing rapidly, with over 100 million active users on Facebook alone. To take advantage of social media, young new graduates should create a professional and consistent online presence across all platforms. They should also focus on building relationships and engaging with their audience by sharing relevant content and participating in industry conversations.

Building on the outcome of previous events, the ECOSOC Youth Forum Arab States session will dive deeper into elements and constitute a continuity to what has been said before, including enabling environments, needed community shifts, required skills for a new post-pandemic labour market and other aspects that concern youth.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

This year's focus will be on the Learning to Earning transition, and the various dynamics that impact a young person's transition from education to the labour market. The ECOSOC Youth Forum Arab States session will showcase young people's own stories, projects, actions for how they are currently managing

those hindering dynamics and finding opportunities. They will share their recommendations for what is fundamentally required for them to excel and thrive through the transition and beyond. The moderator and panellists will be all youth.

Furthermore, the session will also highlight the importance of providing young people with access to skills training, mentorship, and alternative work options, as well as the need for supportive policies and programs that create an enabling environment for their success. Ultimately, the goal of the ECOSOC Youth Forum Arab States session is to promote a youth-centred approach to the learning to earning transition, and to empower young people to become active agents of change in their communities and societies.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Fully youth-led recommendations for all stakeholders, including Member States.
- Youth engaged across the Arab region on the topic.
- Youth voices showcased and elevated regionally and globally.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and capacity-building opportunities for young people, providing them with access to resources and useful practices.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on three preparatory events, this session will be an interactive discussion where the focus will move from discussion to creation actions.

1. 2022 Earning to Learning Regional Forum (HLM): Within the framework of the Issue Based Coalition for Adolescents and Youth for the Arab States, the Regional Offices of ILO, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF convened in May 2022 a Regional High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Young People’s Learning, Skilling, and Transition to Decent Work to address bottlenecks affecting Young People’s Learning to Earning transition. The HLM concluded with the adoption by 16 Arab countries of a set of national voluntary commitments to advance the learning-to-earning agenda in the Arab region.
2. 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) Youth Session: The 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) featured the organization of a Special Session on Youth titled “Moving Forward on the Learning-To-Earning Agenda in the Arab Region”. The session was held in collaboration with UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, LAS and ANND and brought stakeholders together to identify key actions to expedite the school-to-work transition, propose mechanisms for advancing market relevant technical, entrepreneurial and life skills, with a focus on sectors supporting green and digital transitions, and presented an overview of the skills demand in the region based on the ESCWA skills Monitor. It also highlighted progress by governments in advancing the national voluntary commitments on learning-to-earning of youth.

3. 2023 Youth-led webinar with youth by youth on Life after Graduation: the youth development delegates programme (a project funded by the UAE with UNDP) hosted a youth-led webinar on the 16th of March 2023 labeled Life after Graduation which was a discussion by youth with youth on the transition from education to work.

A Youth Committee was created to shape the Concept Note, set the speaking agenda and outcomes sought, and select and prepare the young speakers and moderator. In this task, the role of UN entities is limited to the provision of guidance and support.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

- **Introduction (5 minutes)**
- Welcome and opening by moderator **Mr. Hany Anan (Lebanon)**
- Brief introduction of the topic and objectives of the session.
- Explanation of the session structure and flow.
- **Keynote speech (5 minutes) Ms. Mayada Adil (The Sudan)**
- Sharing more insights on Learning to Earning Transition
- **Panel discussion (45 minutes)**
- Moderator introduces the panellists, all of whom are young people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. (5 min)
- Moderator does a quick *mentimeter poll* for the audience asking them to use their phone to answer and shares the results. (4 min)
- After the poll, moderator introduces the speakers and asks each one the first round of assigned questions. Panellists each have 3 minutes to share their story, highlighting how their transition from education to work was, or their transition from work to better work happened, and identify some key contributing factors to their transition, plus some challenges faced then and now. (12 minutes for 4 speakers).
- Moderator does a poll related to challenges suggested by each panellist to the audience. Question. (4 min)
- Moderator then asks a second round of questions for each panellist to answer such as *“based on your experience, what creative/innovative solutions can you suggest for the various concerned stakeholders to implement (government, academia, private sector, UN, etc.)?”* (20 minutes for 4 speakers)
- **Open Q&A (30 minutes)**
- Moderator opens for questions from the audience as well as experience sharing from youth. (30 min)
- **Conclusion and closing remarks (5 minutes)**
- The moderator summarizes the key outcomes from the session.
- The moderator thanks the participants and speakers for their contributions and closes the session.

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1 on upskilling and reskilling

First Round: What are the main skills you didn't learn at school/ university which are relevant to the market? What in your opinion are the underlying causes? Which skills are mostly in demand by the labour market and how could the education system prepare better to match this demand?

Second Round: Based on your experience, what creative/innovative solutions can you suggest for the various concerned stakeholders to implement?

Question 2 on alternative pathways to work

First Round: Which alternative pathway to employment helped you advance in your transition to the world of work? How did you benefit from this experience and what challenges did you face?

Second Round: Based on your experience, what creative/innovative solutions can you suggest for the various concerned stakeholders to implement?

Question 3 on volunteerism

First Round: How did volunteerism contribute to increasing your employability? In your experience, how does participation in community work help in increasing youth civic engagement and strengthen social cohesion and what challenges hinder this path?

Second Round: Based on your experience, what creative/innovative solutions can you suggest for the various concerned stakeholders to implement?

Question 4 on visibility on social media

First Round: How has social media helped you in creating an appropriate online identity, in increasing your creativity, improving your communication skills and establishing a social network? How has your increased visibility on social media provided an opportunity to find work? What challenges did you face in ensuring that your visibility on social media is consistent and supports your objective?

Second Round: Based on your experience, what creative/innovative solutions can you suggest for the various concerned stakeholders to implement?

Potential polling questions to the audience:

1. From 1-5, what is the biggest obstacle to transitioning from learning to earning?
2. Are you optimistic or pessimistic that governments and the UN can address the challenges associated with the transition from learning to earning?
3. From your experience, where should efforts be placed to support youth transition (multiple choice and we can provide some options).
4. Did you do an internship, or participate in volunteer work or gain other forms of working experience? (yes/ no or how many months)
5. Are you employed? (yes/no) If yes, how many jobs did you apply to before finding employment? Is your contract a temporary or permanent contract?

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO HELP STRUCTURE SPEAKER'S INTERVENTIONS

1. What was your experience transitioning from school/university to work? Can you highlight some of the challenges involved that you faced?
2. What was your vision about the working world during your school/ university time and how do you perceive the working world now? What has changed?
3. What are some solutions you found that really helped you transition?
4. What creative and innovative solutions could you recommend to governments, academia, the private sector, the UN, and others to help improve the transition?

NAMES AND EMAILS OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Speakers:

- **Ms. Farah Ghanem** (Lebanon), on upskilling and reskilling
- **Mr. Talal Ahmed** (Yemen), on alternative pathways to work
- **Ms. Asmae El-Haji** (Morocco), on volunteerism
- **Mr. Ayaan Khalif** (Somalia), on visibility on social media

Moderator:

- **Mr. Hany Anan** (Lebanon)

Keynote Speaker:

- **Ms. Mayada Adil** (Sudan)

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

There are three main engagements occurring before the ECOSOC Youth Forum that will feed into the youth-led discussion at ECOSOC:

1. 2022 Earning to Learning Regional Forum (Amman, April 2022)
2. 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) Youth Session (Beirut, 14-16 March 2023)
3. 2023 Youth-led webinar with youth by youth on Life after Graduation (online, 16 March 2023)

The Youth Committee will be set-up at regional level to shape the Concept Note, set the speaking agenda and outcomes sought, and select and prepare young speakers and moderator.

SUGGESTED READING

[The Arab region may be missing the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Arab skills are still stuck in the past \(unescwa.org\)](https://www.unescwa.org/)