



Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

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

MODERATED CONVERSATION:
#ECOSOCYF – YOUTH AS PIVOTAL AGENTS OF POSITIVE
CHANGE FOR COVID-19 RECOVERY & SDG
IMPLEMENTATION

25 April 2023, 9:30 AM – 10:15 AM (NY Time)
United Nations Headquarters, Trusteeship Council

Background

The ECOSOC Youth Forum is taking place at a time when the world is facing multiple, cascading crises including cost-of-living challenges, conflicts and an escalating climate emergency. Many countries are still dealing with the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, which has severely impacted the lives of young people and their social, educational and economic activities.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), young people (aged 15–24) face severe difficulties in finding and keeping decent employment. Their unemployment rate is three times that of adults with more than one-in-five of young people (23.5 per cent) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). In addition, the ILO stressed that “two thirds of the global youth labour force remain without a basic set of skills, a circumstance that restricts their labour market opportunities and easily pushes them into lower-quality forms of employment.”¹

Young people are constantly aware of the challenges, impacts and risks presented by the climate crisis. Whether through education, science or technology and activism, young people are scaling up their efforts and using their skills to accelerate climate action and increase Governments’ accountability to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees. Their unprecedented mobilization around the world sets an example of how to demonstrate their

¹ International Labour Organisation, [World Employment and Social Outlook-Trends 2023](#), Pages 16-17

priorities for sustainable development and identify what is achievable when decision-makers take the necessary actions. by .

Young people from across the world are also showing their enthusiasm, creativity, determination and courage to address any roadblocks to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world's most powerful framework to achieve prosperity and a sustainable future while preserving planetary resources .. From gender equality to education and skills development to fighting climate change, and protecting our oceans and biodiversity, young people are invaluable agents of change, for current and future generations.

Objectives

Young people play a critical role as innovators and implementers. They can help to steer their societies toward a more equitable and sustainable future.

The purpose of the session will be to:

- Provide an opportunity for the world's young people to leverage their experiences, expertise and creative approaches towards accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.
- Create a space for exchanges of views on lessons learned from recovering from COVID-19 and building the necessary resilience to tackle future shocks.
- Discuss the role that young people can play in scaling up climate action and hold decision-makers accountable.
- Address the meaningful engagement and participation of youth in the development of policies in key areas of their interest (decent work, economic security, social inclusion and cohesion, enhancing youth resilience and building peace).

Format

Mr. Sherwin Bryce-Pease, Bureau Chief and Correspondent, South African Broadcasting Corp, United Nations will be the moderator of the opening session. The objective is to generate a discussion to cover a variety of issues on the role of youth today.

Biographies



Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Achim Steiner became UNDP Administrator on 19 June 2017. The United Nations General Assembly confirmed his appointment following his nomination by Secretary-General António Guterres. In April 2021, the General Assembly confirmed his appointment to a second four-year term beginning in June 2021.

Mr. Steiner is also the Vice-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, which unites 40 entities of the UN system that work to support sustainable development.

Over nearly three decades, Achim Steiner has been a global leader on sustainable development, climate resilience and international cooperation. He has worked tirelessly to champion sustainability, economic growth and equality for the vulnerable, and has been a vocal advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals. [More...](#)



Ms. Shantel Marekera, The 2018 Millennium Fellow, Rhodes Scholar and Founder of Little Dreamers Foundation

Shantel Marekera is a Rhodes scholar who holds a law degree from the University of Oxford.

She is the founder of the Little Dreamers Foundation, an initiative that provides access to education for low-income children in Harare, Zimbabwe. Through Little Dreamers Foundation's women empowerment division, she has also supported the transition of 600+ women from low-income families into decent work and self-employment using a community-based approach to skills development.

She is currently working with the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law to improve access to economic opportunities between men and women in 190 countries around the world. Before joining the World Bank, she served as a member of UN Women's Beijing+25 Youth Taskforce where she represented the voices of over 1 billion youth across the world on different high-level platforms. She has been recognized by UN Women as a leader for Generation Equality and a National Gender Youth Activist. She was also awarded the 4th Annual Youth Activist Changemaker Award by Gucci and Chime for Change for her advocacy work championing women and girls' rights across the world.



Ms. Mai Sami Ahmed, Advocacy Officer Fellow from Save the Children and Next Generation Fellow from the UN Foundation

Mai Sami is an Advocacy Officer Fellow (Child Rights and Participation), in the Save the Children New York Advocacy Office (NYAO). Her role is key to the office's commitment to ensure the protection and rights of children around the world through strategic engagement in key moments, commissions, resolutions, and in the UN space. She works in securing meaningful participation of children

in the UN Space and to inform that issues that disproportionately affect children are clearly addressed in UN outcome documents and resolutions.



Mr. Jichen Liu, Founder of Clear Plate and 2020 Young Leaders for the SDGs

Jichen Liu is the founder and CEO of Clear Plate, an AI-based app that rewards people for not wasting food. Launched in 2018, Clear Plate has more than 9 million users now and is still fast growing. In light of his enduring commitment to combating food waste, Jichen was endorsed by UN as China's first Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals. Jichen Liu is also a Schwarzman Scholar, a fully funded master program at Tsinghua University

which aims to cultivate future global leaders.



Ms. Laura Lock, President of the Cambridge Climate Society

Laura Lock is a British and Hungarian student studying Politics and Sociology at the University of Cambridge. She is the current President of the Cambridge Climate Society and holds a keen interest in deconstructing narratives of development, the intersectionality of climate impacts, and expanding action for climate empowerment.

As an advocate for youth engagement and climate education, Laura has worked as a youth ambassador with several national and international organisations including the ONE Campaign and the Centre for UN Constitutional Research, organising online workshops, webinars, and hackathons. Most recently, Laura attended COP27 as a member of the University of Cambridge delegation and CSW67 with UN Women UK.



Ms. Isidora Guzmán Silva, Young Leader for the SDGs and Founder of "Encuentra tu Lugar" (Find your place)

Isidora Guzman is an 18 inclusion and gender equality activist from Chile. At 13, she created an app to help people with disabilities find parking spots. At 15, she founded the "Encuentra Tu Lugar" Foundation to help people with disabilities find inclusive and accessible places and connect their community with inclusion.

Isidora is a Young Changemaker of Ashoka Chile, National Gender Youth Activist at UN Women, and a Generation Equality Adolescent Committee member. She has participated as a speaker in different international forums, including the "Generation Equality Forum" in Paris, the Asia Pacific UN Women "Youth Activism Accelerator," and the "Girls Speak Out" event for International Day of the Girl, representing the UN Women in 2021.

She is among the 17 young leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals recognized by the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. Currently, she is a Law student at "Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile".