



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM

YOUTH2030

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

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

THEMATIC SESSION ON SDG 11
25 April 2023, 3:00 pm to 4.30 pm (NY Time)
Hybrid Event

IDENTIFICATION	
SDG/theme or Region	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Session title	Amplifying the Voices of Youth for a Sustainable Urban Future: Leading the Way to Recovery
Session co-lead UN	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) UN-Habitat
Session co-lead Youth	International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO) Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
Session co-organizers (both UN and Youth)	United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) International Organization for Migration (IOM)
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>With the rise of urbanization globally, the social, economic, and environmental profiles of fast-growing cities in developing countries will be largely shaped by the young people who live in them. Urbanization brings both opportunities and challenges, making the contribution of young people highly valued in both the present and future. However, this social group is also vulnerable and requires special attention. Since more and more young people move to cities and towns, including refugees and other forcibly displaced youth, they are seen as crucial stakeholders in the process of urban development. With 55% of the global</p>	

population currently residing in urban areas and an anticipated increase to 68% by 2050, it is expected that up to 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030¹.

Despite facing numerous multidimensional crises, such as climate change, ongoing conflicts, discrimination, inequality, and the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have demonstrated a readiness to tackle these issues. These crises have worsened existing divisions and slowed progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, the rapid urbanization is already, and will increasingly be, determined by the worsening impacts of climate change. Therefore, it is essential to question whether the current systems and structures are equipped to address these changes.

Young people have stepped up to face the modern world's challenges and seek effective and sustainable solutions for the most vulnerable individuals. They have been the most dynamic human resource in society, actively participating in rapid response programs and mobilizing to raise awareness of the need to take more action to fight climate change, environmental and social ills, discrimination and biases, and to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction, peace building, violence prevention, and recuperation post disasters. They have also been instrumental in testing, piloting, and integrating technology and science to improve their local conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the interdependence of human and natural systems, and the need for a more sustainable and resilient approach to development. Cities are key actors in the fight against climate change as they emit 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. In that context, young people, including young migrants, are crucial sources of innovation in the search for mitigation and adaptation solutions.

The ECOSOC Youth Forum's thematic session on Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities will offer a platform for young people from diverse backgrounds and various youth-focused stakeholders to amplify the voices of youth from all corners of the world, sharing their expertise, experiences, insights and suggestions on improving sustainable urbanization and youth-led action in cities and other human settlements. The session will be held in a hybrid format to facilitate an inclusive exchange of ideas and interactive conversations among all participants.

The key issues under discussion will include meaningful and effective youth inclusion in urban governance, social inclusion and integration of diverse urban communities including migrants, displaced persons and people on the move to prevent violence and discrimination; and increase positive safety outcomes for all. The discussion will consider and be informed by youth-led local to global climate action, experiences of refugee and migrant youth, youth-led disaster risk reduction, youth in informal settlements and youth-led COVID-19 response. The session will consist of speakers on the aforementioned topics drawn from youth engaged in related work and youth allies supporting them. The session will also highlight the systemic support young people need to develop their individual and organizational capacity so they can lead in their communities and actions to address their needs.

¹ World Economic Forum (weforum.org). 26 July 2021. By 2030, 60% of the world's urban population will be under 18. Are our cities ready? URL: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/07/building-better-cities-for-children-coordinating-within-and-across-city-agencies-to-harness-the-power-of-playful-learning> (accessed: 15 March 2023)

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Provide a platform for stakeholders to interact and contribute to the global and regional discussions of youth inclusion and leadership in recovery processes within urban settlements.
- Exchange best practices, ideas, and novel solutions of young people and involve them in civic engagement and development programs within urban settlements.
- Assure youth voices and allies from a diversity of backgrounds are heard and well represented.
- Explore the role of youth in progressing towards more resilient and sustainable cities, by fostering their creativity and sense of entrepreneurship.
- Develop key messages highlighting youth priorities and solutions for the implementation of SDG 11 in the context of recovery processes.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A deeper understanding amongst panellists and participants on the importance of youth inclusion and governance in recovery and development measures related to the identified topics within urban settlements.
- Full recognition of youth-led initiatives regarding the establishment of Sustainable Cities and challenges faced to achieve said goal.
- Enhanced awareness of youth contribution to building inclusive and diverse cities and urban settlements.
- A deeper understanding of the unique needs of informal and formal youth-led actions and initiatives.
- Elevate the role of youth in advancing migrant integration related to climate migration.
- Key messages highlighting youth priorities and solutions for the implementation of SDG 11 are developed to relay to member states and other stakeholders.
- A better understanding of youth vulnerability in the face of climate change and a mapping of inclusive solutions to better adapt cities with the participation of everyone.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE CONCRETE CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Broader online consultative meetings will be held in the lead-up to the ECOSOC Youth Forum to invite parties to freely exchange on the key issues and agree on the recommendations to various stakeholder groups.

The thematic session will serve to validate and expand on the recommendations coming out of the consultative meetings.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

3.00-3.05pm - Introduction. Greetings, introductions, overview of the session

3.05-3.10pm - Keynote address (Brighton Kaoma, SDSN)

3.10-3.30pm – Panel I:

- Ali Mustafa
- Esmá Gumberidze
- Cata Santelices Brunel

3.30-3.45pm – Q&A session (moderator and speakers)

3.45-4.05pm – Panel II:

- Carolina Cuesta Crosa
- Abba Ali Yarima Mustapha
- Rahildaris Marchena
- H.E. Edmavi Gonzalez (TBC)

4.05-4.20 – Q&A session (moderator and speakers)

4.20-4.30 - Closing remarks and final messages from the speakers.

SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you envision a "youth-friendly" city? What characteristics should it have? And how should stakeholders engage with the establishments of such structures? What are the roles of various stakeholder groups in ensuring that the cities of today and tomorrow are youth-friendly?
2. What is the perspective of youth on the state of disability inclusion in how the cities are planned and governed?
3. What are the barriers that currently exist that hinder youth in engaging in governance in their cities and communities? What groups of young people are at a most disadvantage, such as youth who live in poverty, slums and informal settlements?
4. What is the potential of children and youth to contribute to climate action and adaptation, reducing urban climate risks?
5. How does violence in urban spaces impact youth and affect their participation in society? What are some of the root causes of violence and crime in cities, and more specifically poor areas such as slums and informal settlements?
6. How is the 'right to city' concept applicable to and being realized by migrant and refugee youth?

7. What are the existing solutions that allow youth to participate in decision-making on a local level? What are the key stakeholders that are responsible for tangibly improving the representation of youth, including the marginalized groups of young people, in urban governance?

NAMES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Moderators:

- **Ms Yasmina Benslimane**, Migration Youth and Founder, Children Platform and Politics4Her
- **Mr Pär Liljert**, Director, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Office to the UN in New York

Keynote speaker:

- **Mr Brighton Kaoma**, Global Director at UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Youth

Speakers:

- **Mr Ali Mustafa**, Representative to the United Nations AFS Intercultural Programs
- **Ms Esma Gumberidze**, UNODC GRACE YouthLED board member
- **Ms Rahildaris Marchena**, Tertiary Refugee Student Network
- **Ms Cata Santelices Brunel**, Co-founder, Latinas for Climate
- **Mr Abba Yarima**, UNODC Youth Sounding Board, STRIVE Juvenile, Nigeria
- **Ms Carolina Cuesta Crosa**, National Focal Point, Fridays for Future Uruguay

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

A consultative meeting took place prior to the thematic session to identify the priorities related to the key issues, share good practices, and case studies, and generate conclusions and recommendations on how to address them.

The meeting was held on 20 April in an online format and invited youth and representatives of other stakeholder groups serving the interests of youth to foster a meaningful exchange and integrate diverse perspectives. Specific importance was mindfully given to youth-led initiatives that have provided solutions to local challenges that could be replicated within the different regions.

Some key issues made use of other preparatory events and built upon knowledge products that the co-organizers will launch ahead of the thematic session. For instance, as UNODC is also willing to host a preparatory event that will lead into the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in May 2023, the outcomes of the respective preparatory consultations held in the beginning of April are fed into the thematic session's agenda.

SUGGESTED READING

ECOSOC Youth Forum SDG 11 Thematic Session Preparatory event: Concept note - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1J41XzMgrw6T8pOndUgUZRIKGq-eBbkawkTg34kElkyY/edit?usp=sharing>

UN-Habitat youth-led localization of the SDGs - <https://www.unhabitatyouth.org/youth-2030-cities/>

DeclarACTIONs of youth on sustainable urbanization and SDG localization - <https://www.unhabitatyouth.org/urban-youth-forums/>

Collection of promising practices of youth localizing the SDGs - <https://www.unhabitatyouth.org/youth-2030-cities-promising-practices/>

Urban Safety Governance Approach for Safe, Inclusive and Resilient Cities: https://www.unodc.org/documents/Urban-security/Safety_Governance_Assessment_Guidance_final.pdf